RAJENDRA PRASAD

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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Autobiography

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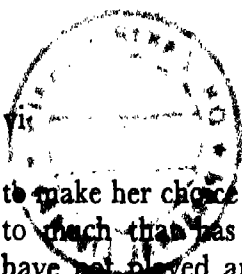
Foreword

A GREATER part of this book was written by me in prison between 1942 and 1945. It brings the story of my life to 1946. The original was written in my own language, Hindi. It has already undergone two editions in that language and it is only now that it has been possible to bring out an English version of it.

I have been connected in a rather intimate manner with many political and other developments in India in the last ten years also. But neither in the second edition of the Hindi original which was published in the beginning of this year nor in this English version which is going to be published towards the end of it has it been possible for me to bring it up to date. There is much that can be said about the work of the Constituent Assembly of India over which I had the honour and privilege of presiding and which prepared and passed the Constitution of India, about the transfer of power from British to Indian hands with which as President of the Constituent Assembly I had been associated, about the Partition of India into India and Pakistan, in settling the details of the division of assets and liabilities in which I had to play a part as a member of the Partition Committee, about the serious food situation which the country had to face in 1946–47 when I was the Food and Agriculture Minister, about the aftermath of the Partition in 1947–48 and latterly about the governance of Independent India as its President under the Transitory Provisions of the Constitution from 1950 to 1952 and then after the General Elections as its regularly elected President from May 1952. But I have had no time to write about all this nor is it, perhaps, appropriate for me to do so while I occupy the position of President for a second term.

The years that have elapsed since the cessation of hostilities of the Second World War have seen tremendous changes not only in India but all over the world and even more so in the realms of science and technology. They are also posing some of the most difficult and intractable problems that mankind has ever had to face. India cannot escape them and has had

to make her choice and do her little bit. I have been a witness to much that has happened in this country even where I have not played any significant part. But all this has to be said and assessed at a later time and, perhaps, better by others.

RAJENDRA PRASAD

Rashtrapati Bhavan
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My Ancestors

In a village called Amorha in Uttar Pradesh live a large number of the Kayasthas. Long ago, one Kayastha family migrated from that village and settled in Ballia. Then a branch of this family moved into Gaya and another pushed northwards and settled in the village of Zeradei, in the present-day district of Saran, in Bihar. It is to the latter that I belong. The ancestors who migrated to Zeradei preceded me perhaps by seven or eight generations.

Educated though poor, this family was readily accepted as settlers by the Zeradei villagers who lacked education. One of the family managed to get employment in the nearby Hathua Raj, which was in those days a small estate with a modest income. Thus began a connection with Hathua Raj* which was to last quite a few generations.

My ancestors lived in thatched huts like the other villagers. In Zeradei, they were the ryots of another big Kayastha zamindar. To this day, my family has not secured a share in the zamindari of the village though, in course of time, we acquired zamindaris in several other villages.

Mishri Lal, my grandfather, died at an early age, leaving his only son, Mahadev Sahai, my father, in the care of Chaudhur Lal, his elder brother. Chaudhur Lal had a son, Jagdev Sahai, and he brought up Mahadev Sahai too as his own son. Chaudhur Lal attained a great reputation in Hathua Estate. He rose to the position of Dewan and worked in that capacity for more than 25 years. Salaries were not high in those days, and my grand-uncle received only Rs. 100 a month. But he got free rations, and quite a number of villages were leased out to him by the Raja and these lands yielded an excellent rice crop, which was a sufficient source of income by itself.

Maharaj Chhatradhari Sahi was on the gaddi those days.

* The Permanent Settlement (1793) which established the system of zamindari was abolished in Bihar by a land reforms measure adopted in 1952. With its enforcement, the Hathua Raj and the other zamindari estates have ceased to exist.

He disinherited his son and made his grandson, Rajendra Pratap Sahi, his heir. He placed such great reliance on Chaudhur Lal that at the time of his death, he entrusted the welfare of his young grandson to him. The young ruler had to face many a difficult situation and Chaudhur Lal helped him out of them. Some members of the Raja's family filed a suit for the inheritance, which went up to the Privy Council. The Privy Council, however, decided that the Estate was impartible and that the owner of an impartible Estate had the right to make a will. Rajendra Pratap Sahi's title to Hathua Estate was thus upheld.

While the litigation was going on, Rajendra Pratap Sahi's life was in danger. Chaudhur Lal used to sleep near his bed and, afraid of the young ruler being poisoned, would even taste his food first.

Not only did Chaudhur Lal thus protect effectively the life of the Raja but he also made considerable improvements in the administration of the State. By settling people on uncultivated lands and by adopting other progressive measures, he raised the income of the State by 300 per cent. The Raja had a great regard for him and, it is said, as a mark of respect, he never smoked before him.

Chaudhur Lal never oppressed the tenants and they reposed great trust in him. This could be gauged from the fact that when I toured these parts during the non-co-operation movement, old men of the area would welcome me particularly because I happened to be the grandson of Chaudhur Lal.

Chaudhur Lal was also able to improve the status of his family. He purchased a zamindari with an income of about Rs. 7,000 a year. Many of the villages were bought in the names of both of my grandmothers because it was they who got the paddy from the *zeerat* lands in the villages leased to my grandfather milled and sold and provided the money for buying the villages.

Chaudhur Lal made arrangements for the education of his son, Jagdev Sahai, and my father, Mahadev Sahai. The study of English had not yet come into vogue. Perhaps the proposal to send the boys to Chapra for English education was mooted once or twice, and my uncle did go through a book or two of English, but the Raja did not encourage the idea, and the two

brothers had to content themselves with the study of Persian, which was taught by the same Maulvi who coached the Raja's son, who later became Maharaj Krishna Pratap Sahi.

After the death of Maharaj Rajendra Pratap Sahi, the administration of the State passed into the hands of the Court of Wards for some time. As Chaudhur Lal did not know English, he had to relinquish his dewanship, and he thought it derogatory to accept a lower post. This meant a break of a long connection with Hathua Estate.

Leaving Hathua, Chaudhur Lal went to Zeradei. Some time later, he became Dewan of Tamukhi Estate, in Gorakhpur district, but finding the climate unsuitable, he soon quit the post. His last days were spent in Zeradei.

It was in Zeradei, on December 3, 1884 (corresponding to Paush Krishna 1, V.S. 1941) that I was born, the youngest child in a family of three daughters and two sons. One of my sisters died while yet a child. Bhagvati Devi, the eldest of the family, became a widow early in life, and has been living with us ever since. The next sister died without leaving any issue. Next was my brother, Mahendra Prasad, who was elder to me by eight years.

Jagdev Sahai, my uncle, was elder to my father. He had only one child, a daughter who died at an early age.

2

My Childhood Impressions

MY eldest sister, Bhagvati Devi, was married into a very well-to-do family. When I was four or five I visited her place, and one of my childhood impressions is the great pomp and glory in which that family lived. My brother-in-law was born in a family of six sons and each one of them had an attendant for himself. They lived in a palatial house and kept fine horses and even a few elephants. Within a few years, before our very eyes, all this estate, with an income of seventy to seventy-five thousand rupees a year, dwindled and was sold off. My brother-in-law died at our house in Zeradei when I was very young, but I have never forgotten the pathetic wails of the members of my household. That was the first occasion when I saw Death face to face and the scene is still vivid in my memory.

Other childhood impressions are those of the marriages of my second sister and elder brother.

My cousin sister, who was five or six months younger to me, and I were pets of Chaudhur Lal who used to play with us whenever he was free. My uncle was managing the zamindari then and often visited Chapra in connection with the never-ending litigation that always goes with a zamindari. He would also visit my brother who was studying English there. I still remember how when he was returning, seeing him from afar, we would run, shouting joyously, towards him, demanding sweets and fruits which he invariably brought with him.

My father also lived in Zeradei and, having little to do with the management of the estate, he spent most of his time in gardening, of which he was very fond. He planted a lot of trees and even today we possess two mango orchards raised by him, the delicious fruit of which revive past memories.

He was a scholar of Persian and had some knowledge of Sanskrit too. He was greatly interested in the Ayurvedic and Unani systems of medicine. He had collected a good many books on these subjects and would often be seen poring over them for hours on end. He became thus a good *vaidya* or *hakim* without any systematic education. Many used to flock

to him for treatment. To the poor he gave medicines free with the help of a servant whom he kept for dispensing, and for the rich he wrote out prescriptions. He would neither feel the pulse nor see the patient to diagnose the trouble. He would prescribe medicines after merely hearing about the symptoms and the patient's condition. Many were cured, and this gained him a considerable reputation.

My father had a fine, well-built body. He was fond of exercise and wrestling from childhood. I remember how, when I came home from school or college during the vacations, he would swing heavy clubs and show us quite a few tricks with them, to the delight of us all. He even taught others that art. A fairly good rider, he always kept a good horse for himself. He taught brother and me to ride, and many were the days when, in the vacation, we would go out riding in Zeradei.

Rustic games like *kabaddi* and *chikka* interested us a great deal, and this interest lasted till we had finished collegiate education. My brother used to play another game which involved climbing trees. Afraid of climbing trees, I could never partake in that game. Another regret is that I could not learn swimming, there being no river near Zeradei.

Ours was a strongly built, old-fashioned house with a courtyard inside and with rooms and verandahs running all round. Each room had only one door and a couple of small ventilators near the roof.

From my very childhood, I got into the habit of going to bed early and waking up before dawn. During the winter months, when the nights are long, I would wake up rather early and rouse my mother also from sleep. She would then recite some *bhajans*. Sometimes she would tell me stories from the *Ramayana*. These had a deep influence on me. Stirred by interest, I would often, when lying in bed, coax my mother into reciting more *bhajans* and narrating more stories which she would do till the early morning light trickled in through the ventilator.

In the evening, I would be so drowsy that my mother would put me to bed just after sunset, even before I had my dinner. In those days, dinner would be ready rather late in the night; sometimes the servants finished their last meal just

before daybreak. My mother would always wake me up in the night for dinner. It was quite a job for her to feed a drowsy child, but a maid-servant in the house became an adept in this.

Going to bed at sunset and waking up early became with me a habit which I could never shake off and it continued while I was in college. Even while I practised at the bar the habit persisted. In 1914-15, when I was preparing for the M.L. examination, a funny incident occurred. I was practising at the Calcutta High Court and had some cases on hand. I was also a professor in the Law College. Busy in the mornings with my cases and the preparation of lectures and during the day in the courts, I could study only in the nights. But sleep would envelop me as soon as I took up a book. With the M.L. examination approaching, I tried my best to keep awake till 9 p.m. I tried reading while walking up and down the room. But once sleep was so overwhelming that I tripped and fell down. Though some injury I did sustain, I wonder how I escaped a broken head. That was the end of a dangerous experiment. From then on I contented myself with reading in the spare time I could get.

3
Maulvi Saheb

I BEGAN schooling when I was five or six, along with two of my cousins, the eldest of whom was Jamuna Prasad, our leader in games and boyish pranks. According to custom, a Maulvi Saheb had to initiate us into the alphabet. On the first day he began our education in the name of Allah and an offering was made to him. Sweets were then distributed to all around.

An uncle of ours, younger than my father, a man full of zest, was like my father in many respects. He too was a good rider, was fond of attending the sick and distributing medicine, was a good shot and very clever in the use of the catapult. He was very good at chess. He was well-read in Persian. In all these things, however, he accepted my father as his superior. He was a fine soul, full of humour. The Maulvi who was a queer man, given to making tall claims, afforded a good target for Uncle Baldev's jokes. Uncle Baldev took great delight in drawing him out and later disproving his claims, but nothing daunted, the Maulvi would persist in his habit. Though claiming proficiency in chess, not once did he defeat our uncle. We children, though we enjoyed the situation, would not laugh, out of respect for the Maulvi.

One day when we went out for a walk, we saw a bull standing in the middle of the road. Someone said it was a rogue and attacked passers-by. When Uncle asked the Maulvi not to go near the bull, he declared his fearlessness and passed too near the bull with a contemptuous tilt of the head. The next moment, the bull lifted him on his horns and tossed him to the ground.

On another occasion Uncle Baldev induced the Maulvi to handle his gun. The Maulvi said he was a fine shot. To test his ability, Uncle called him out and we all followed them. Uncle pointed out a vulture on a tree at some distance and asked the Maulvi to prove his skill. The latter raised the heavy gun, an old-fashioned muzzle-loader, with a little difficulty and fired. He, of course, missed the vulture, but the recoil

of the gun threw him back and he fell flat on the ground with a thud. He had to be carried off the field.

Our study of Persian, meanwhile, progressed. In six months, we picked up the Persian alphabet and started reading the *Karima*. Then the Maulvi left us. Another Maulvi was appointed. He was a serious-minded man and a good teacher. He taught us for two years and we completed the *Karimá*, *Mamkimá*, *Khushahal Simiya*, *Dastur-ul Simiya*, *Gulistan*, *Bostan*, etc. Thursday afternoons and Fridays were holidays for us and during those days we learnt counting and picked up the *Kaithi* script.

The Maulvi lived in a room in the house adjoining ours. The *Maktab* (school) was located in a verandah of his house. We would sit on a *takhatposh* (wooden cot) and the Maulvi on his own. The school began early in the morning. We had to repeat the previous day's lesson which we had learnt by heart. After we had finished, we passed on to the next lesson. Often I would be the first to reach the school and would finish my lesson and would be taught a new one before the others. When the sun was high in the sky, the servant would come to fetch me for breakfast. After an hour's recess the same routine was gone through. We would also practise writing, on a wooden plank. Our classes would seem interminable as after an hour and a break at noon we would start again and continue till an hour before sunset. After sunset, we would begin again and study in the light of an oil lamp. When the Maulvi gave us leave we would bow reverently and go home.

In the evening session, we would feel sleepy but were afraid of dozing lest the Maulvi should beat us. Jamuna Prasad, my elder cousin, was full of ruses to make the Maulvi let us go early. One ruse was to empty a packet of dust in the lamp on the pretext of adjusting the wick, unseen by the Maulvi. The dust would absorb the oil and the lamp would start flickering in a few seconds. The Maulvi would curse the maid-servant for the inadequate supply of oil and would break up the class.

The little Persian we learnt goes entirely to this Maulvi's credit. We had started liking him and we felt sorry to leave when we had to go to Chapra.

4
Life in the Village

VILLAGE life then was far simpler than it is today. Zeradei and the adjacent village Jamapur are so interlinked that it is difficult to say where the one ends and the other begins. It would not, therefore, be wrong if, in respect of their population, the two villages are treated as one; their combined population was just over two thousand.

Almost all the necessities of life were available in the village itself and people seldom went out. There were a few well-stocked cloth shops which met the demands of the local people as well as the petty traders from the surrounding villages. All provisions like rice, pulses, flour and condiments were available. From a shop or two even indigenous medicines could be had. Cigarettes and betel leaves were not available then, although crude tobacco was stocked by some shopkeepers. Sweetmeat shops did not exist then.

Two days in the week, village bazar was held, when shopkeepers came from the neighbouring villages on horseback, on bullock-carts and on foot and displayed their wares. Sweets were available on those days, and one could buy even fish and meat. When our needs were not met locally, we would go to Siwan, the sub-divisional town having a police station, a magistrate's court and big shops.

A large number of Koiris lived in our village, and they supplied us vegetables which were available in plenty. Our supplies of milk and curd came from Ahirs who lived in the nearby villages. Household spinning was common and a continuous supply of yarn was assured to the many weavers in the village.

The Muslim population consisted mostly of glass bangle manufacturers, petty pedlars, masons, tailors and weavers. There were no Sheikhs or Saiyads amongst them. The Hindu community was composed of Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumihars, Kayasthas, Koiris, Muris, Kamkars, Turhas, Gonds, Doms, Chamars, Dusadhs, etc. The Rajputs formed the largest number; some of them were zamindars belonging to old

respectable families and some were ordinary cultivators. There were only five Kayastha families in Zeradei, including ours and two of our kinsmen. There were few visitors from outside except near relations. Once every few months a pedlar would come to the Maulvi with a bundle of some Persian books and one or two bottles of black ink. Whenever he came there was no end to our curiosity. Sometimes in the winter a hawker would come with oranges. It was an event in our lives. We would feel overjoyed and I would run to mother carrying the happy news. Once after having told mother while I was running back to the hawker I tripped and fell down with bleeding lips. On another occasion I sustained a deep cut below the right eye. The scar which that injury left is still there on my cheek below the right eye.

Mangoes in the season and sometimes bananas were all we could get by way of fruits. Our uncle, whom we called Nunu, would sometimes bring grapes from Chapra, but they were expensive. They were not sold then in bunches. They came in small wooden cases, put in between cotton wads.

There were two small Mathas (monasteries) in the village, each with a Sadhu to perform the traditional Puja. The Sadhus were fed by the villagers. On Ramnavami and Janmashtami days, the Mathas were well decorated. Even children would help by making paper flowers and buntings. On these days we fasted. On the Dadhikando day we used to sprinkle curds and turmeric on each other.

Almost every year a Pandit came to the Matha in the month of Kartik to recite the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagwat* or some other *purana*. On the last day of the *katha*, villagers would make their offerings. Our family would make the largest offering as we were considered to be the most well-to-do in the village. Often the *katha* was recited at our very door, and we met the entire expenses. When it was sponsored by the villagers, the Pandit was their guest, by turns.

Another source of entertainment was Ramlila in the month of Aswin. A party would come to the village to stage Ramlila, and the whole village would be agog for two weeks. The stage would sometimes be set in Jamapur, sometimes in Zeradei. Most of the actors being illiterate, a Pandit would read out passages from Tulsidas's *Ramayana* and the actors would repeat

them. The crowd being large and the whole show being spread over a large area, few could hear the dialogue, but the hustle and bustle of the actors and the scenes of mock fighting greatly entertained the audience. With great eclat were enacted the scenes of Rama's marriage, his coronation and his fighting with Ravana. For the marriage, horses and elephants would be brought and a regular marriage party organised with great pomp. On the day of Lanka's destruction small houses were constructed and were actually set on fire.

Those who played Hanuman and the demons would use masks which frightened children. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana dressed themselves gorgeously, their make-up taking an hour or two. Rama and Lakshmana would not walk like ordinary people but, always conscious of their importance, affected a peculiar gait. On coronation day, people of the neighbouring villages would come to make offerings to Rama. The day's collection was the mainstay of the organisers of Ramlila. On the following day, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, in their ceremonial costumes, would visit the houses of the well-to-do, whose womenfolk were unable to see the Ramlila because of the *purdah* system.

One thing which left a deep impression on me in my very childhood was the recitation from the *Ramayana*. There were very few literates in the village and not only in Zeradei but in the whole neighbouring area there was not one Primary School. The Maulvi who coached us charged about rupees four per month besides board and lodging. There was a weaver who knew *kaithi* and the *deshi* accounting system which included the method of calculating prices at various rates as also calculations about areas of fields, etc. He had set up a private school where some boys used to study. Though very few could read or write, often in the evenings, people would gather at the Matha where someone would read out from the *Ramayana* and the whole congregation would repeat it to the accompaniment of the drum, cymbals and other rustic musical instruments. Thus, despite their illiteracy, many knew couplets from the *Ramayana* by heart.

Among the festivals, the most popular was Holi, during which all distinctions of caste and wealth were thrown overboard. The singing of Holi songs would start from the Basant

day. People would gather in groups and sing in chorus to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. Sometimes people would come from the nearby villages and there would be a friendly competition. The singing would last the whole night. Once the singing continued till after sunrise and the competing groups had to be persuaded to give up. In the group singing it is the drummer who has a most strenuous job. Once a competing village group had only one drummer. He played for the whole night. He got blisters and they burst but nothing daunted he continued. Blisters formed and burst, formed and burst again but he saved the honour of his village. He received a hero's praise when people learnt of the feat on the following morning. On the Holi day abusive couplets were the fashion. A party would start from one end of the village and would march, showering abusive couplets and hurling mud and dirt at everyone till it reached the other end. The Chamars, the Brahmins and the Rajputs would shout at each other and exchange handfuls of mud. This would last up to noon. Then when the religious ceremonies and the meals consisting of *puris* and *malpuas* were over, the throwing of colour and *abir* would begin and continue the whole day. People would meet, sprinkle colour and *abir* and distribute fruits and betel-nuts.

In other villages, people might indulge in drinking during the festivities, but in our village, the Rajputs, Brahmins and Bhumihars looked upon drink as a sin. Even the Kayasthas never drank because of an ancient belief that whoever touched drink would become a leper. The drink habit, therefore, has not entered our family up to this day.

Diwali was also celebrated with due pomp. Houses would be whitewashed and illuminated with small earthen lamps. The houses of the rich would be tastefully decorated with plantain tree pillars and bamboo arches and illuminated with long rows of earthen lamps. Lakshmi puja preceded the illuminations. It was customary to gamble with shells after illuminations. We did it just for the sake of form but some people actually gambled, losing and winning stakes. Though illuminations were a special feature of the Diwali night only, some people would light a few lamps and hang them on long poles in front or their houses during the whole month.

Dasahara was looked upon as the festival of the zamindars.

Kali puja was sometimes performed in Navaratras when an idol was installed with great pomp and show. I have never seen it in my own village, but once in a neighbouring village, I witnessed it. I still remember the image of goddess Kali who was all black, holding a human skull and sabre in her hands. During Ramlila, Ram's coronation came off generally on Dasahara day or a day before or after. On the day of Dasahara our grandfather would move out accompanied by many people and all of us children forming a small procession to catch a glimpse of the sacred bird *Nilkantha*.

Anant Chaturdashi was another community festival. People fasted up to noon after which, after listening to *katha,* they would have a special meal. There was no further meal for the day, and after sunset not even water could be touched. There was a curious custom which greatly amused the children. After the *katha* was over, the Pandit would place a couple of cucumbers on a large plate in which he would pour some water. The listeners would place their hands on the plate. The Pandit would ask them: " What are you looking for? " They would reply: " Anantphal (the eternal fruit)." Then the Pandit would want to know if they had got it and, on an affirmative reply, would ask them to put it on their heads; and the listeners would sprinkle the sacred water on their heads. The Pandit would distribute amulets of yarn to everyone. We, children, would get beautifully coloured amulets. Some would keep the amulets tied round their arms for the whole year. The wearer undertook to abstain from eating meat, just like those who wear Tulsi beads.

As one could see, religion permeated the village life, and there was perfect harmony between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims would join Hindus in the boisterous festival of Holi. On the occasion of Dasahara, Diwali and Holi, the Maulvi would compose special verses. We, children, would draw beautiful paintings on sheets of paper and the Maulvi would inscribe on them his verses, an interesting hotchpotch of Persian and Hindustani. We would then go and read them out to our parents who would give us some money to be presented to the Maulvi. We would commit the verses to memory and sing them during the festival.

Hindus participated in Moharrum by taking out Tazias.

The Tazias of the well-to-do Hindus in Zeradei and Jamapur were bigger and brighter than those of the poor Muslims. These Tazias were eventually taken to Karbala. On the way, people would raise slogans of Ali and Imam and play *gadka*. The atmosphere would be surcharged with enthusiasm and all distinctions between Hindus and Muslims would disappear. When sweets were distributed, everyone would put out his hand, but the Hindus would not take water from a Muslim. The Muslims, however, understood Hindu sentiments and did not mind it.

Most of the disputes in the villages were amicably settled, without resort to litigation. Any dispute which the elders failed to compound would be brought to my grandfather or uncle for settlement.

When cases of theft occurred, a police inspector and some constables would visit the village and camp there for several days to make inquiries. These visits were a matter of great sensation to the villagers. The houses of suspected persons, usually those who had a bad reputation, would be searched. The suspects would be tied hand and foot and roundly beaten. Whether this process resulted in the tracing of the culprits I do not remember.

We had a small zamindari, and we lived amicably with our tenants. We never had to go to court with them. But we were once involved in a protracted litigation over some land with another Zamindar who shared a village with us. Originating from the time of my grandfather, the case went on during my father's lifetime. After his death, my brother settled the dispute amicably.

5
English Education

For my English education, my people decided to send me to Chapra where my brother had already gone for his studies. When that decision was taken, Uncle Nunu thought it necessary to take me to Chapra on a sort of reconnaissance trip. After staying there with my brother for a few days, I returned home. That was my first railway journey and hence a memorable experience for me.

Then occurred a tragedy in the family, the untimely death of Uncle Nunu at the early age of 45. He had gone to attend the marriage of Phulan Prasad Verma's* father in a neighbouring village. There he had an attack of cholera. He, however, recovered and came back home. Our village was in the grip of the epidemic, and he had a relapse. Before medical aid could arrive he passed away. No swift conveyance was available those days. The doctor arrived at midnight on an elephant but by then uncle had died. This sudden calamity threw the whole house into mourning and confusion. He was the only son of our grandfather, Chaudhur Lal, now in his seventies, and the entire work of managing the household was in his charge, my father not taking much interest in this work. My going to Chapra was, therefore, postponed for the time being.

It was more than a year later that I went to Chapra for studies. My brother lived in a small house on a monthly rental of Rs. 3. He had a cook. He had a tutor to coach him, but the tutor's services had been dispensed with before I arrived. I joined the District School in the eighth class, which was then the class for beginners. No tutor was engaged for me. Any assistance I needed I got from my brother. I used to be very attentive in the class and learnt to rely on myself. At the end of the year I appeared for my class test and secured the first rank. I scored such high marks that it led to an interesting development.

* Phulan Prasad Verma who later became a relation was a member of the Damodar Valley Corporation ever since its inception till his untimely death in 1957.

The headmaster of the school was Kshirod Chandra Roy Choudhry, reputed to be a very able man. Teachers and students alike looked on him with awe. My promotion to the next class had been announced and I was celebrating my success when I got a call from the headmaster. As generally the headmaster called students to his room only when they were reported against, I was seized with fear when I went to him. But I had a pleasant surprise in store for me. Without any preliminaries, he asked me if I would like a double promotion. I was somewhat confused, partly by over-elation and partly by the misgiving that I might not be able to cope with my studies in the higher class. So I asked for leave to consult my brother. He asked me who my brother was, and when I told him, he laughed. He knew my brother as he had been his student. He asked, " Does your brother understand these things better than myself? " He, however, allowed me to consult my brother.

From the headmaster's room I ran straight to brother who was preparing for his Entrance Examination along with Bankey Bihari Lal and Maulvi Shafi Daudi. When I told them the news they all felt overjoyed. Then they held a short conference. My brother thought that it would be difficult for me to come up to the level of the other students. He, therefore, took me back to the headmaster and told him so. The headmaster laughed again, saying, " Do you understand the problem better than myself? " Eventually, he gave me a double promotion.

A few days later, my brother went to Patna to appear for his examination and from there he returned to Zeradei. I was now left alone in the house with the servant. Then my village colleagues, Jamuna Prasad and Ganga Prasad came to join my school, and we had a happy time together. I was then aged ten.

My brother came out successful in the Entrance Examination, and it was decided to get him admitted into the Patna College. They had to shift me too to Patna. So then, my two village colleagues and myself accompanied my brother to Patna. He joined the Patna College and the others, the T. K. Ghosh Academy, which was considered to be a very good school with a large number of students on the rolls. On joining

the new class, I began to feel that my brother's views on my double promotion were sounder than those of the headmaster. I thought that the other boys knew more than I did. But I set my heart on the task of making up this deficiency. As there was no tutor, I had to depend on my brother and other friends for assistance, and I worked hard.

Though I was devoted to my studies, I never neglected games. At Chapra, I used to play football. But in Patna there were no arrangements for games, and the school did not have even a playground. Still we used to go to the school in the evening and play about with an ordinary ball. My brother was very good at games, being proficient in football, cricket and other sports. He was a member of the college team. In Patna there used to be a weekly fair on Mondays in the month of Shravan. We would go with great gusto and pester brother to buy us little things. Once, on my insistence, he bought for me a beautiful toy image. On another Monday a pick-pocket deprived Bankey Bihari Lal of the contents of his pocket. He was caught and prosecuted. Brother and Bankey Bihari Lal had to tender their evidence. That was the first occasion for me to see a Law Court.

Once a friend of my brother came to Patna from our village in search of employment and stayed with us. He was a bit of a wrestler and fond of exercise. He set up a small gymnasium in the courtyard of our house and started giving lessons in wrestling and general exercise to all of us. One day Bankey Bihari Lal, who was also living with us, had his foot dislocated while wrestling. This damped our enthusiasm, and no more was heard of wrestling or exercise.

While we were in Patna we heard of plague for the first time. It descended on Chapra district after ravaging Bombay. Its visitation synchronised with a terrible famine. When we went home during the vacation, we saw some Government officials staying in our house. They had come to organise relief for the famine-stricken people.

After two years, my brother took his Intermediate Examination and went to Zeradei, and I, with my friends, continued in Patna. I got my regular promotions during these years.

6
The Zamindari

OURS was a prosperous zamindari. The total income was seven to eight thousand rupees a year, and after paying the land revenue, we were left with five thousand to six thousand net. *We had hundreds of bighas of cultivable land in which* rice, wheat, maize, pulses and other crops were sown. Sugarcane was also grown and when converted into gur it brought us some ready cash. The yields from the fields were always plentiful. We had a number of milch cattle and several pairs of bullocks. This scene of plenty was, however, to change soon.

The zamindari, as I have said earlier, was purchased and maintained by my granduncle. Uncle Nunu took over the management later, but after his death, the work devolved on my father. Some trouble-makers told my granduncle that when he passed away, my uncle's only daughter and my aunt might be left without protection and advised him to execute a will to safeguard their future. The repeated onslaught had its effect, and my granduncle decided to leave a will. A draft was prepared at Siwan and according to it, my aunt got two villages with an annual income of Rs. 1,000 for her lifetime and my cousin was given a share of seven annas in the rupee in the whole zamindari. We were to get the rest.

Ours was a joint family; it was not, therefore, certain that our granduncle had the right to execute such a will. Had there been no will, my father would have inherited the whole zamindari, my aunt would have been entitled only to maintenance and her daughter could have claimed no share at all. My father was ignorant of the whole thing until everything was ready and the Registrar came to Zeradei for registering the document. My granduncle's advisers had pointed out that if my father was made to witness the will, he would have no right later to question its legality. My granduncle, therefore, asked my father to witness the deed. My granduncle had been led to expect that my father might raise objections, but my father, though shocked when suddenly faced with this situation, told him, his words vibrant with emotion, " I would gladly carry

out your wishes. You have brought us up, and this zamindari is the fruit of your efforts. I would have no objection even if you give the whole of it to Chandramukhi (my uncle's daughter). My sole wealth is my two boys. My only request is that you bless them."

We were also sent for by granduncle. He wept bitterly and started blaming all those who had instigated him and tried to create unnecessary doubts in his mind. My father signed the will as a witness, and the document was registered.

My granduncle and grandmother fell ill while we were studying in Chapra. On hearing the news we rushed to Zeradei where they died one after the other. My father became head of the family and the management of the estate fell on his inexperienced shoulders. Misfortune beset the zamindari. The same lands that yielded rich crops would not now yield enough even to meet our household expenses. Seeing losses all around, father stopped all cultivation for some time. Those were hard days for us.

When I was studying for the Entrance Examination in Chapra and my brother was studying for his B.A. in Allahabad, my father found it hard to meet our expenses, but he never lost heart and decided that money must somehow be found for the education of his sons. I remember that when my brother had to deposit his examination fee of Rs. 50, my father had no money. The Dewan (general manager), who had been with us since grandfather's time and who was looking after the zamindari, could not procure the sum. Greatly distressed, therefore, my father pawned my mother's gold necklace and thus remitted the amount. My brother used to say that the situation in the zamindari was all due to the Dewan, but we could do nothing about it.

As misfortune would have it, Chandramukhi died while yet unmarried, after a few days' illness. Aunt lived for many years and spent her share of the income on charity and pilgrimage. She visited almost all the places of pilgrimage in the country, and on these trips, her constant companion was my widowed sister. After my aunt's death, we, two brothers, became the sole inheritors of the zamindari.

7
Marriage

I WAS perhaps in the fifth standard and was thirteen when my marriage was arranged. I had gone to Zeradei for the summer holidays. The bride's father, a Mukhtiar in Arrah, and his younger brother, a lawyer in Ballia, who had come to our village, visited our house to see me. My father sent for me. The visitors put me some questions and after a while I retired. They were satisfied and signified their approval of the match. After a few days, the *Tilak* (the symbol of betrothal) was received, and, according to custom, clothes, utensils and a cash present of Rs. 2,000. My father was not keen on the cash present, but since the bride's party insisted on it, he accepted it.

Two thousand rupees then was considered to be a fairly good sum. The greater the present on the occasion of betrothal, the greater must be the pomp and show in the marriage procession and the costlier the customary offering of ornaments, etc., for the bride. Our financial position was not very sound at the time. The deaths in the family had brought us considerable financial strain; the zamindari was not quite profitable owing to famine conditions and our expenses had gone up, what with our education and the protracted litigation in which the family was involved. Despite these difficulties, in order to maintain the prestige of our family, my father decided to make the marriage a grand affair. He spent generously on ornaments. Other expenditures were equally lavish.

We had a custom of taking out elaborate marriage processions with horses and elephants. The day of my marriage being an exceptionally auspicious day and there being many marriages on that day, horses and elephants were in great demand and so we were able to procure only one elephant and a few horses.

The marriage was to be held in Dalan-Chapra in Ballia district, 40 miles from Zeradei. This meant two days' journey. The party being big and there being only one elephant and a few horses, many *palkies* were pressed into service. My brother came riding on a sturdy horse, my father and other relatives

in *palkies* and I in a special *palki*. The bridegroom's *palki* was a funny affair. Made of silver, it was a very heavy burden for the bearers. Open at the top, it had a canopy to protect the rider from the hot June sun. The wind blew up the canopy, turning it into a sort of balloon and made the progress of the bearers difficult. What with the sun and the hot winds, riding in a *palki* was no fun.

In the evening, we encamped in a village on the bank of the Sarju. We rested for the night and the next morning we started crossing the river. The luggage, the *palkies*, the horses and the bullock carts were transported on boats while the elephant was made to swim across. But the elephant had other ideas on the subject. It seemed to be bent on going back home. The mahout tried his best to set it on its course; the elephant would go forward a little but would turn back. After an hour of hide and seek like this, efforts were made to tie it to the boats and tow it across, but it was of no avail. With the elephant having decided views, we reluctantly abandoned the idea of taking it with us. The mahout returned with his elephant. To my father it was a wrench. His own marriage procession having been distinguished by the presence of scores of elephants, he was naturally dejected that his son's marriage party should not have been honoured even by a single tusker. But already we were behind time; so we set off at a brisk pace. In the evening, however, my father's wish was gratified. When we were nearing our destination, we saw a few elephants coming towards us. They had been engaged by another marriage party and were returning after the wedding was over. A few words to the mahouts and the matter was settled; the elephants joined our party. We reached the bride's place at 11 in the night.

The bride's party were getting nervous because of the delay in our arrival and though relieved when at last we arrived, they were a bit disappointed as our party was not to their expectation in pomp and show. But their spirits revived when they saw the ornaments, dresses, sweets and other presents, which we had brought for the bride. Whether they felt happy to see the bridegroom too, I do not know!

As I said, when our party arrived at the journey's end, it was late in the night and I had fallen asleep in the *palki*. The pre-nuptial ceremonies had to be gone through and it was

quite a job for my people to wake up the boy bridegroom. After two days' tedious journey, it was with a Herculean effort that I managed to keep my eyes open through the ceremonies. The wedding took place the same night.

Details of the ceremonies I do not recollect. When a child, I used to join my sister in the game of dolls' marriages. To me, my own marriage was not much different. I neither understood the importance of the marriage nor felt its responsibility. I had had no hand in settling the match. I went through the ceremonies like an automaton, doing whatever the Pandit or the women of the house told me to do. I could hardly understand what had happened. All that I knew was that someone would come into my house as my wife just as my brother's wife had come.

After the marriage is over, sometimes the bride does not accompany the groom to his home immediately. Some time later, another small party goes to fetch the girl. This ceremony is known as Duragman. This was so in my case. We returned home after two days' stay in the bride's house. Duragman was performed a year later when my wife came into our house.

We were strict observers of purdah. I remember when my brother's wife came to our house, she brought two maid-servants and she could talk only to them. She had a room to herself and she never came even into the verandah. None was permitted to enter the courtyard except the cook and tender-aged boy servants who, along with their mothers, had frequented the place in their childhood. The cook had to give a loud warning before he could walk across the courtyard to the kitchen. If he required anything, a maid-servant got it for him. When my sister-in-law wanted to go for her bath, everyone was cleared out of the courtyard. Not even a boy was allowed to hang around. For added protection, two maid-servants would carry bedsheets as curtains on either side when at last she walked to the bath. She would pull on her veil even when my mother, aunt or sister entered her room. No maid-servant of Zeradei could go to her room. Except for once or twice as a boy, I had never seen her face.

When my wife came to Zeradei, she had to act likewise, but after a long time, the rules were relaxed. As the maid-servant whom my wife brought with her left, a local servant

was engaged and my wife was permitted to talk to her. Whenever I came to Zeradei during holidays, I used to sleep in a room outside. In the middle of the night, my mother would send a maid-servant to wake me up and she would take me to my wife's room. Before morning while all others were yet asleep I would have to be back in my own bed outside.

This is how husband and wife met in purdah. As I had to remain away from home since my very childhood, we met like this only during the holidays. Although it is 45 years since we were married, I wonder if we have lived together for as many months. Even when I was practising as a lawyer in Calcutta, I had to live by myself. When I settled down in Patna, my people lived with me only for a short time. And when the Non-co-operation Movement began, I could hardly keep my wife with me in Patna or go and see her in my village. There was so much to do that my preoccupations left me little time for my personal matters.

Once when I had gone to Zeradei for the holidays, my wife got an attack of cholera. I became very anxious about her health, but it was considered bad form in those days to express anxiety about one's wife. I wanted to meet her but could not express the desire to do so. Probably, it did not occur to my people that I too was interested in her health. However, my father's treatment completely cured her, and I was relieved. I do not know how long I would have observed the custom of the day had she continued in her serious condition for some time more.

It was only natural that the health of my brother's wife and my wife should deteriorate because of their confinement within the four walls of their room. Both of them suffered from rheumatism which left them a long time later only when they started moving about freely in the courtyard.

8

Back to Chapra School

WHEN my brother passed his Intermediate Examination, he desired to join the Medical College in Calcutta. It was decided to send him there, but it was not considered proper to send me also with him and my father had me admitted in the Hathua School. Getting admission there was a little difficult and it was arranged only after I had passed the test.

My brother did not get admission into the Medical College and so he came back to Patna and joined the B.A. class. As I had already been admitted in the Hathua School, it was decided to let me continue there.

Here I found things entirely different from the Chapra School and the T. K. Ghosh Academy. Whatever lessons were given for the day, particularly so in history, the students were asked to memorise and repeat the following day. I was never accustomed to memorising without understanding and in all the six months I was in the school I was never able to perform this feat even once. Not that I did not try. Someone told me that if I repeated a passage 120 times, it could be memorised. I used to get up early in the morning and act on this golden rule, but I only got more muddled. My teachers got angry and threatened to demote me. I never had such a bad time in any other school.

At this stage, I fell seriously ill and remained in bed till the annual examinations. I could not appear for the test though I was confident of getting through. When my brother came home for the vacation, he advised father to send me back to the Chapra District School. Accordingly, after I got well, I was re-admitted into the Chapra School in the same fourth class.

In Chapra I lived with Vikramaditya Misra, a famous astrologer. He was like a guardian to me. He used to bathe every day in the Sarju and he never ate or drank anything touched by any other person. Nearby there was a temple to which the Pandit would take us almost daily. Because of his influence, some of us boys, who came into contact with him,

used to look upon ourselves as staunch Sanatanists and would not hesitate to pick up an argument when we happened to meet an Arya Samajist.

At the Chapra School, I seemed to have regained my lost powers. There was a large number of students in our class and so it was split into three sections. The teacher of our section was a Bengali, Rasik Lal Roy. He had an excellent method of teaching and was very good to the students who had a great love and respect for him. I became a favourite student. Although there were in the class many bright boys, scholarship-holders who had passed the Middle Examination and who were very good in history, geography and mathematics as they had already studied these subjects through the medium of Hindi, after a short while my teachers and classmates began to feel that I was also one of the best students.

Though I had not been able yet to top the list in my class examinations, Rasik Lal Roy told me that if I worked hard, I would be the foremost boy and would beat even Ramanugraha, the most brilliant student of our class. How he could predict this I do not know but it was to come true in a couple of years.

In the annual examination, I came fourth and I got a prize. In the next class, the third, Rasik Lal Roy and another teacher, Rajendra Prasad, taught us. The latter took history and his method was so good that one could always remember his lessons. His method was just the opposite of that followed in Hathua. Intelligence here was gauged by ability to explain things in one's own language, and I was able to do this very well. The unsuccessful efforts which I had made in Hathua to memorise passages had, however, left in my memory a legacy of a stock of words, idioms and phrases which I started using now. This gave me the advantage of a good style in writing which my teachers found immensely pleasing.

In the annual examination in the third class, I got the third rank. In the class examinations in the next higher second class, I secured the first position and Ramanugraha was ranked second, thus fulfilling Rasik Lal Roy's prophecies. Rasik Lal Roy continued to teach us in the higher classes. Though he left once to join another school, he came back after some time. Rajendra Prasad was transferred elsewhere and he never returned.

Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Raghunandan Tripathi was the head Pandit in our school. While studying Persian in the class, I learnt Sanskrit at home with his help. I tried to pick up grammar, but it was too much for me and I gave it up.

Of all the teachers in the school, it was Rasik Lal Roy who had made an abiding impression on me. As months passed, my familiarity grew into intimacy. I feared him and yet had affection and reverence for him. My association with Rasik Lal Roy helped me to increase my general knowledge. He used to tell us a lot about the country and explain how one could rise high in life. When I reached the Entrance Class, he advised me to work hard and said that I could secure a good position in the University. I did not understand then what he meant; I thought it just meant that I might get a scholarship.

While I was doing the annual examination of the second class, Chapra was in the grip of a plague epidemic. After I had answered two papers, I got a swelling in the neck and developed high fever and I could not sit for the examination further. Father rushed to Chapra and took me to Zeradei where he treated me himself and cured me. Though probably it was just mumps, people thought it was plague. In the confusion we forgot to pay the school fees. When the results were announced, I found I had stood first in both the subjects for which I had taken the test. The marks I scored were so high that that was considered enough to qualify me for a pass in all the other subjects. In those very days a new headmaster had taken charge and in my absence I was promoted to the next higher class. Nevertheless my name had been removed from the register for non-payment of fees. When I got well I sought re-admission.

One day Rasik Lal Roy told me that it was a misfortune that my name had been struck off the rolls. He explained that according to rules only those boys were entitled to scholarship in the University after the Entrance Examination, who had been attending the school regularly for at least one year. So he advised me to ask my father to send an application to the Director of Public Instruction for exemption from the rule requiring one full year's attendance. It was to be stated that on account of my having got plague I had to leave school and

could not pay the school dues which resulted in my name being struck off the rolls. It was also to be made out, having in view the high marks scored by me in two subjects, that I was expected to secure a scholarship if only the particular rule could be relaxed.

An application was thus submitted through the headmaster. Though he refused to recommend my application thinking there could be no exemption and saying that I had not been treated by a qualified doctor and that no medical certificate had been produced, he forwarded it to the Director through the Inspector of Schools. The Inspector did not deem it necessary even to refer it to the Director but sent it back to the Headmaster granting the exemption sought. The headmaster announced this in the class, adding that he was doubtful if the Inspector had the authority to do so, but, anyway, he assured me that I need have no more anxiety in the matter.

After this Rasik Lal Roy goaded me to work hard. He gave me a lot of help and, without charging me any fees, came to my room to give tuitions. There were three categories of scholarships: (1) Two or three scholarships of Rs. 10 each per month awarded to those who were placed first in the district; (2) two or three scholarships of Rs. 15 each per month for the foremost students in a Division; and (3) ten scholarships of Rs. 20 each for the first ten boys in the University. Bihar was part of Bengal, and the jurisdiction of Calcutta University extended over Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Burma. There was only one examination for all these regions and to attain one of the first ten ranks seemed to be a phenomenal task, but it was for this that Rasik Lal Roy asked me to aspire. So I worked hard.

There used to be a home test in the school, a kind of selection test for the University Examination, and in that I had to face an obstacle. Drawing was an optional subject but the marks obtained in it were taken into account for the award of scholarship. Although I had scored very high in other subjects, the Drawing Master refused to allow me to sit for drawing in the University Examination. After a lot of persuasion, he agreed to give me the permission on condition that I devoted an hour daily to drawing. My name was entered for the University Examination.

I took the examination in Patna and returned to my village where my brother too had come from Calcutta for the holidays. In Patna after having sought admission in B.A. he had fallen seriously ill and on medical advice had gone to Allahabad for further study. He joined the Muir Central College there and passed the B.A. Examination that very year. Then he went again to Calcutta to study for the M.A. and B.L. degrees. When he came home on holiday he would talk a great deal about various happenings to which I would listen with rapt attention. It was perhaps in 1899 when he had come home from Allahabad that he talked of the 'Swadeshi' idea. He had brought with him Swadeshi cloth. From then on I began wearing Swadeshi cloth only till Gandhiji started the khadi movement.

The idea of Swadeshi was not confined to clothes only. When buying anything, this was kept in view as far as possible. I remember using Indian-made pens for my University examinations, but I am sure that shopkeepers exploited the Swadeshi-minded, and passed on many articles of foreign make as of local manufacture, which in our credulity, we believed. Our faith in Swadeshi, however, was not shaken.

One day on hearing that the Entrance Examination results had appeared in the Gazette, we went to Siwan but could only know that I had been placed in the First Division. A few days later we received a telegram which said that I stood first in the University. My brother read it first and jumped with joy. We carried the news to father whose happiness knew no bounds.

While sending my application for the Entrance Examination, I had stated that in case I got a scholarship I would be studying in the Presidency College, Calcutta. Accordingly, it was now decided to send me to Calcutta.

9

I Go to Calcutta

AFTER the result was out, I went to Chapra. There I learnt that the whole school had done well in the University Examination. I got a scholarship of Rs. 20 per month for topping the list in total marks and Rs. 10 for being first in English. Ramanugraha got a scholarship of Rs. 20, two boys of Rs. 15, and two others of Rs. 10. The number of first divisioners was also very large, and only one or two failed. Never before had the Chapra District School fared so well, nor had any other Bihar school ever achieved such results. Teachers and the headmaster were overjoyed. Brajkishore Prasad, a young lawyer who had started very well and who commanded some influence at the Bar threw a party to celebrate the event. Though his native place was only six miles from my village, I did not know him. The party was held but I was suddenly taken ill and could not participate in it.

Rasik Lal Roy was elated beyond measure. He feted me with mangoes and sweets. Then he took me aside and said that this result had enhanced my responsibility. This was the first time that a Bihari had topped the list in the University. Bengali boys, he said, would not tolerate it. He said they would work hard and try to beat me in the Intermediate Examination and scheming boys might even seduce me from my work. I should, therefore, be very alert in Calcutta and should maintain by hard work the position I had attained. He said I should not be guilty of sloth or negligence and that I should keep in touch with him always. He said, " Calcutta is a very big city. It is full of places of entertainment and distraction, many of which are undesirable. You should keep away from all these and spare no pains for maintaining your high standard." I told him that I would always cherish his advice and endeavour to stand first in the Intermediate (F.A.) Examination also.

I fell ill, and my departure to Calcutta was delayed. At last when I accompanied my brother to Calcutta, the colleges had already opened. There was a great rush at the Presidency

College and admission had been closed. My brother spoke to the Principal, Dr. P. K. Roy, and he agreed to admit me. But no accommodation was available in the Eden Hindu Hostel in which my brother was staying. (He was studying for the M.A. in Duff College and for the B.L. in Ripon College.) So an additional cot was put in my brother's room and I lived with him.

Calcutta, the city of massive buildings, wide roads and fast tram cars, thrilled me. Our hostel looked like a palace compared to our Chapra lodge. Everything I saw was a new experience to me, but I constantly remembered Rasik Lal Roy's advice.

In the class too, I had a strange experience. Most of the Bengali boys were bareheaded. Some of them wore European dress and hats. Not having seen such things before, I thought these must be Anglo-Indians or Christians but when their names were called out, they turned out to be Hindus. They were probably the sons of men who had been to England for education and were practising as barristers or doctors. It was only the Muslim boys, who joined the Madrasa but actually attended the classes in the Presidency College, who wore caps. Some Marwari boys had a new kind of head-dress. The class was divided into three sections, as the number of students was large.

We had to study Physics and Chemistry in addition to English, another language, History, Logic and Mathematics. Physics was taken by Dr. J. C. Bose and Chemistry by Dr. P. C. Roy. My very first class was a Chemistry class, and Dr. Roy came and began taking the roll call. When he was about to close the register, I told him that I did not know my number. He looked up and said, " Wait, I have not yet called the numbers of the Madrasa boys," and he opened another register. I was in achkan, pyjama and cap and he had mistaken me for a Muslim. I told him I was not a Muslim and I had joined the College only that day. He asked my name. When I mentioned it, all the boys turned round to look at me (I was in the last row) because they knew that someone of that name had stood first in the University. Dr. Roy asked me why I had joined so late and I told him it was due to illness. Then he told me that my name had not yet been put down in the

register and when it was done, he would mark me present for that day also.

There were few Hindi-knowing boys in the class. I made friends with Devi Prasad Khetan, a Marwari who hailed from Bihar and whose father was a jailer. I mixed with Bengali boys too and some of them continue to be my good friends to this day. I would mention only a few names here: Yogendra Narain Majumdar,[1] who is the Standing Counsel of Bengal at present; Girish Chandra Sen, who became Deputy Collector and is now Secretary to the Bengal Government[2]; and Avinash Chandra Majumdar,[3] a Government Translator. J. M. Sen Gupta, who is unfortunately no more, also studied with me and lived in the same hostel. The warning that Rasik Lal Roy had given me seemed to be without any basis.

I had hardly attended the College for a week when I was taken ill again. It was a relapse of malaria that had attacked me while in Chapra. For months I remained in and out of bed. In spite of the best attention of the hostel doctor, I continued to suffer. One day a big meeting was to be held in the Town Hall where well-known leaders of Bengal, among whom was Surendra Nath Banerjee, were to express their opinion on certain decisions of Lord Curzon. I was for three days without fever but was not in a fit condition to attend. My brother wanted to go with his friends but was afraid to leave me alone. I, however, persuaded him to go. When I was alone, fever came back and I started shivering. I took my temperature frequently. At last it touched 106 degrees. I was at my wits' end and regretted having allowed my brother to go. But as suddenly as the fever had come, it began to recede and by the time my brother returned, the temperature had become normal. I was in the same state as when he left me except for my exhaustion. When I told him of what I had gone through, he vowed he would never leave me alone again in such a state.

I had attended the college barely for a week and I went home for the Puja holidays. There I recovered and by the time I returned to Calcutta I was quite well. But a few days later, I had a relapse. I was worried that at that rate I would not

[1] Eventually he became a judge of the Calcutta High Court and is now retired.

[2] He has also retired. [3] He is practising as a lawyer.

be able to sit for the University Examination. Then my brother took me to Dr. Neel Ratan Sarkar. His prescription proved effective and I was soon cured. I took his medicine for one full year. Heaven knows how much quinine I consumed in those twelve months. Twenty-five years later, a homoeopathic doctor told me that my asthma was the result of taking so much quinine!

I began to work hard after recovery. I was very much behind the class in studies and I had to make up for the deficiency. I began to study every subject with the aim of standing first in it. Apart from the prescribed textbooks, I read three or four other books on every subject. Considering myself weak in Mathematics, I devoted special attention to Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry. I went through whatever books I could lay hands on on these subjects and tackled all problems. I worked out the questions in all University papers I could procure. I paid special attention to Mathematics because I was told that Higher Mathematics was essential for higher science which I wanted to take up after passing the F.A. The teaching of Dr. Bose and Dr. Roy was such that I was greatly attracted to Science and wanted to know more of these subjects. Prof. Binayendra Nath Sen, our history professor, was a capable and a kind man and used to visit me in my hostel and give me a lot of encouragement. But he could not " entice " me from my love for science. I tried to acquire theoretical knowledge of Physics and Chemistry almost up to the B.Sc. standard.

In the College test before the University Examination, I topped the list in every subject. In one or two subjects my attendance was just below the required percentage. The professors were kind. They gave a number of extra lectures so that I might make up in my attendance and be allowed to sit for the examination.

At the time of sending the examination application forms, an interesting incident occurred. In spite of my performance in the college test, when the result was declared it was announced that I would not be permitted to sit for the University Examination. The Principal, an Englishman, himself came to the class to announce the result. When he finished reading the names of successful students, I was surprised to see that

my name was omitted. Anxiously, I shouted that my name had not been called. The Principal had not taught us and we were all strangers to him. He replied that my name was not called out because I had failed. I said it was impossible. Pat came the reply that it was equally impossible that my name should have been omitted had I passed. When I tried to answer him, the infuriated Principal said: " Keep quiet, otherwise you will be fined." Again I began to speak; " Fined Rs. 5," he shouted. When I indicated that I had something to submit to him, his words rang out, " Fined Rs. 10." The fine thus had mounted to Rs. 25 as bidding in an auction, when I caught sight of the College Head Clerk making frantic signs to me from behind the Principal, asking me to be silent and assuring me that everything would be set right. I kept my mouth shut then. The next day the form was filled and the examination fee deposited. None raised any objection. The clerk had rectified the mistake. No one demanded the fine from me nor did I try to pay it.

I worked hard for the F.A. Examination. When the results were announced I found that I had scored the highest marks in English, Persian and Logic, but in Mathematics and Science I was below the top man by a few marks, although in the total I was first in the University.

I obtained a scholarship of Rs. 25 for two years, in addition to a scholarship of Rs. 10 for having stood first in English and another of Rs. 15 (the Duff Scholarship) for having stood first in languages. Besides, I got a number of books as prizes for being first in Logic.

The results convinced me that I would never be able to master Mathematics and that, therefore, Science would be difficult for me. Accordingly, I changed my plans and joined the B.A. class. In those days the same subjects were taught to all students up to F.A. class. After the F.A. examination it was open to a student to go in for Arts or for Science and join either the B.A. or the B.Sc. class. After my admission, I met Dr. P. C. Roy. He asked me, " Why have you deserted our ranks? " I replied that I was rather weak in Mathematics. He smiled and said: " Why did you not consult me? I am also not very good at Mathematics, but that did not make me quit Science." He felt sorry, but it was too late for me then to change over to Science.

In a way I felt glad that I had maintained my position as Rasik Lal Roy had enjoined on me. He was transferred to Calcutta and was very happy to see me. I used to meet him very often. Some time later he died.

10

Agitation against Overseas Travel

AFTER my F.A. Examination in 1904 I returned to Zeradei for the summer holidays. My brother was also there. We learnt from the newspapers that Dr. Ganesh Prasad was returning from overseas after receiving higher education. A Kayastha by caste, he hailed from Ballia. After his D.Sc. from Allahabad, he had gone to England for higher education and from there he had been to Germany. He made a name for himself in Mathematics. On the eve of his return to India an agitation had begun for accepting him back into the community. There were two parties in Chapra: the reformist party, headed by a budding lawyer, Braj Kishore Prasad, which stood for accepting foreign-returned people into the caste, and the opposition group, led by two old, leading lawyers of the place, which was strongly against relaxing the rules of Sanatana dharma. Braj Kishore Prasad came to our house and pleaded that Dr. Ganesh Prasad should be accepted into our fold and that father should participate in the community dinner to be held at Dr. Ganesh Prasad's house. My father agreed.

Till then Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha was the only Kayastha of Bihar who had been abroad. There was also some agitation on his return twelve years previously, but he had refused to do penance and abide by the restrictions imposed by caste. He was not, therefore, reinstated in our caste. Dr. Ganesh Prasad, on the other hand, had agreed before his return to accept all social restrictions. He had led a very simple life in foreign countries and had not touched meat or drink. He, as well as the reformists, thought that this was the only way of popularising foreign travel.

On the return of Dr. Ganesh, a day was fixed for the dinner. Twenty people were to participate in it. At the last moment, my father could not go and so he sent my brother and me instead. So, along with our friends, Jamuna and Ganga, we went to Ballia. This caused a great stir there. Our ancestors hailed from Ballia and so we had many kinsmen there. Our

family Brahmin priest lived there. A few relatives of my wife practised at the Ballia Bar. When we arrived in Ballia many of our kinsmen came to dissuade us from joining in the dinner. When we told them that we had our father's permission, they were greatly pained and they bitterly complained that they had not been consulted. My wife's relatives, however, despite their views, did not attempt to bring pressure on us. After the dinner I left for my second sister's place, Paiga near Chapra.

Meanwhile the names of all those who had participated in the community dinner were published in newspapers, and it created a great stir in Chapra. People began to talk of ostracizing us. Mahamahopadhyaya Shiv Kumar Shastri's mandate was obtained from Banaras against overseas travel. Preparations were afoot for holding a convention of all the Kayasthas of the district. But I was unaware of all these developments.

I left Paiga and reached Chapra *en route* to Zeradei. My brother-in-law, who knew neither of our participation in the Ballia dinner nor the agitation that was going on in Chapra, came with me to Chapra on some private business. I rested there for the night and in the early morning, taking leave of him, went to Chapra station to take the train for Zeradei. The house of Braj Kishore Prasad was near the station and I sent my servant to find out if the University Examination results had been announced. He sent word that the results were out and that I should not go without meeting him. I dashed to his house. He told me the good news of my brilliant success at the F.A. Examination and as he was in a hurry to go to the court (the courts opened at seven in the morning then) and as he wanted to discuss about the agitation, he asked me to accompany him. When I entered the Bar Library in the court premises along with Braj Kishore Prasad, a good many lawyers surrounded me. They congratulated me on my success in the examination, and when Braj Kishore Prasad had taken leave of me, plied me with questions regarding Dr. Ganesh's dinner. They wanted to know who had joined in the dinner and I told them without reserve. I never knew that my truthfulness was going to result in trouble.

It transpired that some of the participants in the dinner had got unnerved when the agitation started and contradicted the newspaper report about their involvement in the affair.

That is why the lawyers had tried to ascertain from me the truth of the whole thing.

My brother-in-law happened to come into the library after I had left. He was also interrogated. When he heard the news, being an orthodox individual, he was stunned. He hotly denied the fact of my participation and said that if I had gone to Ballia I would certainly have told him. Then they told him that I had myself told them so a few moments ago and I was in the library and he could confirm it himself. But by then I had already taken the train for Zeradei. My brother-in-law was bitter that I had told him nothing.

When I reached my village, I learned that, after my results were known, father had performed some religious rites and given a big party in which the Kayasthas not only of Zeradei but also of the neighbouring villages had participated. I told my brother of the Chapra agitation and gave Braj Kishore Prasad's message that in the forthcoming convention in Chapra, we should send our supporters and try to get a resolution in favour of overseas travel adopted.

Kayasthas from all over the district attended the Chapra convention. Mahamahopadhyaya Shiv Kumar Shastri came from Banaras to give his mandate. Efforts were made to persuade those who had participated in the Ballia dinner either to issue a denial or to undertake penance, but such endeavours did not succeed. The district was divided into two camps; East Chapra was with the opposition group led by two well-known lawyers, while West Chapra, to which we belong, was in favour of overseas travel. Our family, which was considered respectable, was amongst them.

The convention, to which we did not go, was held in Panchmandir, a beautiful temple built by a Kayastha. A well-known lawyer was to be its president. As soon as the session began, someone from our side proposed the name of Saraswati Prasad for presidentship. This gentleman from West Chapra, a pleader at Gorakhpur, had taken part in the Ballia dinner. The proposal was promptly seconded. The conveners were taken unawares. They had given the name of the old lawyer as the president in their circular. They had not expected any opposition and they had thought that their resolution would be carried by an overwhelming majority. This move, therefore,

showed that there would be rough sailing and they got nervous.

Suddenly, from a corner came a demand that the president should be elected. The conservatives, angered, refused and insisted that only the person mentioned in the circular should occupy the chair. The old lawyer began to walk towards the dais. Simultaneously, from another side, Saraswati Prasad also began to proceed towards it, saying that the meeting had proposed his name and, therefore, he was the rightful president. Pandemonium broke out, and the conservatives declared the meeting ended, as cool discussion was not possible. The reformists booed and clapped and, announcing that they had scored a victory, left the meeting. Things had shaped themselves exactly as they wanted. Had votes been taken they would have lost heavily.

The conservatives, however, held another meeting the next day, but the reformists did not participate. A resolution was carried proposing that all those who had joined in the Ballia dinner should be ex-communicated and boycotted socially. Printed copies of the resolution, with the names of the rebels, were distributed all over the district. The reformists, on the other hand, contended that the meeting was not representative and refused to accept the resolution. They called for another meeting of both parties, before whom the resolution could be placed. Then followed a spate of statements and counter-statements. In the resultant confusion, the threatened social boycott could never be implemented effectively.

Nevertheless efforts were made to hold public meetings. A meeting held at Siwan with the object of announcing the Chapra resolution, however, turned against the organisers. The meeting was well attended. A majority of the community of Siwan was with us; Braj Kishore Prasad, Saraswati Prasad and our own family belonging to Siwan sub-division. At that meeting our group got a resolution adopted that the Chapra resolution was not binding on us and that the brotherhood of Siwan was with us.

So far as we were concerned, the boycott did not work, and the people of the neighbourhood maintained their normal relations with us. But pain was caused to us by the attitude of my second sister's husband. The boycott movement was strong

in his area. Pressure was brought to bear upon him and he was persuaded to write a letter to my father saying that he had no relatives except ourselves but that he would have to dissociate himself from our family unless we either denied the participation in the Ballia dinner or undertook penance. An emissary brought that letter to my father.

My father was perplexed and pained to receive such a letter from his only living son-in-law, but he never thought that we had committed an offence. He, however, added that if we had kept out of the dinner, we could have avoided this trouble and we might have been in a better position to help the reformist agitation. When my mother came to know of the letter, she said: " There is no question of a denial now, as it would be a blatant lie. As for penance, let us wait and see." A reply along these lines was sent to my brother-in-law. There the matter rested for the time being.

When my father had to go to Chapra in connection with a case some time later, that very old lawyer who led the conservatives held our brief and he wanted me and my brother to undertake penance. My father evaded him by saying that we were in Calcutta and that he would talk to us when we returned to Zeradei. A lot of pressure was thus brought to bear upon us indirectly.

Our cousins Jamuna Prasad and Ganga Prasad, who lived in Chapra and who had participated in the dinner, had to undergo some hardship. They bore the brunt of the social boycott. At the students' mess, students would not eat or drink anything touched by my cousins. But they gladly put up with this and, after a few months, the boycott fizzled out.

Later, differences arose among the kinsmen and family members of the orthodox group. Inter-marriages, however, took place between the opposing groups, and the restrictions which the conservatives contemplated could never be imposed. Difficulties were thus cleared from the path of overseas travel for Kayasthas.

Dr. Ganesh Prasad, the cause of all this controversy, never forgot our first meeting in Ballia and as long as he lived was very good to me. He held the chair in Mathematics at Allahabad University, later at Banaras Hindu University and finally at Calcutta University.

11

Dawn of Political Consciousness

I WAS admitted to the B.A. class. We had to take three subjects, English and Philosophy as compulsory and an optional subject. I selected History and Economics. For the Honours Course some extra books had to be read as the examinations were different from that of the Pass Course. One had to attend more lectures and the tests were more stiff. One could offer Honours in more than one subject. For merely getting a degree the Pass Course was enough. But for getting the scholarships of Rs. 50 and Rs. 40 offered after the B.A. Examination result, it was the Honours marks that would be taken into consideration. I, therefore, joined the Honours classes in all the three subjects, despite the hard work they entailed. But I was not decisive as was Ramanugraha, who did so without hesitation. Our Professor of Philosophy was an indifferent teacher, and soon I lost all interest in the subject. I dropped out of the Philosophy Honours class and decided to offer Honours in English, History and Economics.

After some time Dr. P. K. Roy began taking Philosophy classes. He taught so well that I began to think Philosophy was about the easiest subject. His lectures were so interesting and thorough that listening to them attentively would obviate the necessity of reading books. In fact, I did little else apart from attending his lectures and yet passed the examination. I regretted that I had not taken Honours in Philosophy also but it was now too late.

Professors of English and History—Mr. Percival and Binayendra Nath Sen—taught their subjects well and my interest in these was maintained. Mr. Percival was a great scholar. He was a bachelor and lived alone in his house. He hardly mixed with anyone and his only companions were books of which he had quite a good collection. He was very punctual and would never waste a single minute in the class or outside. His classes over, he would go straight home to his books; he hardly moved out except to attend the meetings of the University Senate of which he was a member. He dressed

simply and disliked those who dressed foppishly. His simplicity, devotion to duty, unassuming manners and strictness could not but make a great impression on us all. We feared and respected him. Whenever he was the examiner, in the college or the University, he would keep a record of the results with him. When a student came to him for a certificate, he would consult his register and give a certificate strictly on the basis of the results. Consequently, Mr. Percival's certificates carried great weight. He remained on the staff of the Presidency College for thirty years, working as Principal for some time.

I was very much interested in my studies, but after I had reached the B.A. class a new feeling stirred me, which diverted my attention from examinations to other things. Satish Chandra Mukherjee had founded an organisation called the Dawn Society whose membership was open to students. There was no subscription. The aim of the organisation was to help students in their studies, equip them with a knowledge of current affairs, and help build their character. The students had also to render some social service.

Two classes were held every week at which lectures on the Gita and general knowledge and current affairs were delivered. For the latter class Satish Chandra Mukherjee himself would deliver lectures; sometimes he invited others to take his place. Among these invitees were Principal N. N. Ghosh and Sister Nivedita. The members had to be punctual and attendance was taken. Every student was asked to take down notes of lectures and write out summaries in a notebook specially supplied by the Society. Satish Chandra Mukherjee would later correct them and point out the mistakes to every student. At the end of the year he would send these notebooks to some well-known person for evaluation. Prizes were awarded to the best writers.

The choice of subjects of these lectures used to be wide. They enhanced our knowledge of the world as well as of our country and influenced our thoughts a great deal. Summarising the lectures helped us immensely in writing better and faultlessly.

An example of social service was the shop run by the members of the Society. It dealt in swadeshi cloth and other goods and was open for two hours in the evenings.

A good University student, Satish Chandra Mukherjee had passed his B.A. in the same year as Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee. At college, he was a contemporary of Swami Vivekanand. He joined the Bar but gave it up soon and took to public work, to which he devoted his entire attention and remained a life-long bachelor. He wanted to develop the character of students and so was born the Dawn Society. In this undertaking he was helped by great personages like N. N. Ghosh, Sister Nivedita, Sir Gurudass Banerjee and others.

After once attending a lecture, I joined the Society. Satish Chandra Mukherjee took kindly to me and gave me a lot of attention; to this day he has remained kind to me.* Here I made friends with many students who later became well-known, e.g., Benaya Kumar Sarkar, who is a scholar and writer of fame, and Ravindra Narain Ghosh, who later became Principal of the Ripon College. He died recently. I also obtained a scholarship and prizes which were given me with highly encouraging remarks by Sir Gurudass Banerjee.

Association with the Society stirred my thoughts. Examinations no longer held my attention and my imagination was caught by public and social affairs. In my school days I had organised a debating society outside the school, where we used to meet every Sunday, read papers and make small speeches. With a new-found interest in Calcutta, my activities increased. We established a Bihari Club which worked on the lines of the above debating society. I also took part in the College Union and was elected its secretary for one year. I had a hand in running a monthly magazine brought out by the Union.

My inclinations towards public activity since early age were now crystallized. I had been a newspaper reader and whenever the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress were held, I used to follow the proceedings avidly. I had always attended public meetings addressed by men like Surendra Nath Banerjee. But it was the Dawn Society and the association with Satish Chandra Mukherjee that gave the tendencies present in me an aim and a direction. I began to think in terms of the future.

In 1905, a year after my passing the F.A. examination the

* He spent his last days in retirement at Banaras and died some years ago.

anti-Partition agitation started. I was already familiar with many a public organisation and used to attend meetings held under their auspices. I began attending the meetings held to protest against the partition of Bengal as there was no restriction on such activity by the students. Surendra Nath Banerjee, Bipin Chandra Pal, A. Choudhary and Aurobindo Ghosh used to address these meetings. At a meeting held on August 7, 1905, it was decided to boycott foreign goods and propagate Swadeshi. Many people took an oath to buy Indian-made goods only. As for me, I was glad that I had already been following that principle.

Soon the agitation gathered momentum. Public meetings were held almost every day. There was a great stir among the inmates of my hostel. Even those who had never used Swadeshi now began to patronise it. I cannot say much about the elders, but the students were certainly swayed by extraordinary enthusiasm.

I would mention one interesting incident here. In order to take down notes in the class I used to take an ink-bottle and a pen. Once a new pen called Stylopen, probably the first fountain pen to come to India, was seen in the market. I bought one as it obviated the need of carrying an inkpot. My hostel mates began to criticise me for possessing a foreign article. But I knew that one of these critics had a large stock of foreign-made paper and another had a newly-made expensive coat of foreign cloth. The students had decided to make a bonfire of foreign goods in the courtyard of the hostel. When the boys started teasing me, I decided to call their bluff. I invited them all to my room and said: "Come on, open your trunks, all of you. Let everyone burn all his clothes of foreign make. I shall also open my trunk and any little bit of foreign cloth you find will be instantly consigned to the fire." I threw open my trunk, and except for the pen, they did not find a single piece of foreign cloth. Quietly they slid out of the room, and from then on none criticised me. Few people took the bonfire call seriously and some felt that a few pieces could be spared and burnt and the vow fulfilled. Hardly anybody was ready to set fire to his wardrobe, which in most cases contained clothes of foreign make. The first of my critics burnt his foreign letter paper, but, to the best of my memory, the other friend with a

new coat did not find the courage to burn his valued possession; only he did not put it on for a long time. Many others did likewise.

The year 1905 was thus a year of great agitation and national awakening. A new consciousness had dawned, particularly among the students. Quite a number gave up their studies. At this time a great national educational institution was opened in Calcutta. Satish Chandra Mukherjee joined that institution, and some time later the activities of the Dawn Society slackened. Many of the old associates of the Society joined the new institution. But I never thought of leaving college and joining the others as the aim of the institution was not very clear to me and I was not prepared for a sudden change in my plans.

I have been somewhat indecisive by nature from my childhood and to take a bold step in a hurry has been always difficult for me. Anyway, at that time I thought that there was no need for such a bold step. At the time of the anti-Partition agitation and the Swadeshi movement, the question of students leaving colleges was never raised in the manner in which it was emphasised at the time of the 1920-21 agitation. I was then only an outside sympathiser, not an active participant. But a sure consequence of this agitation was that I began to devote less time to books and became somewhat indifferent to examinations.

During the Pooja holidays in September-October when I was in the second year of the B.A., I stayed on in Calcutta as I realised that if I was to get through the University Examination in March I must devote some time to studies. Later I appeared in the college test and, without knowing the result, left with some of my friends for a place called Jamtara, in the Santhal Parganas of Bihar. I had no fears of failure in the test, though I thought that I might not score the highest marks, and I wanted to prepare for the University Examination without any distraction or disturbance. I, however, knew I had secured the first position in History Honours as Mr. Percival, who was our examiner in the subject, had told us the results soon after the test.

Meanwhile the results were announced in the college. The Principal, who had instructed the professors not to divulge

the results to the students, came to our class to announce the results himself. He stated that I could sit for the English Honours examination but not for History Honours. Some of the students who knew my result in the latter subject were mystified but, gathering courage, told the Principal that I must have passed in History Honours. The Principal, who never lectured in our class and did not know me, shook his head. The students pointed out that I had stood first in all the examinations and obtained scholarships and it was impossible that I should have failed. The Principal replied that when I had scored the highest marks I had obtained scholarships but when I had not passed in History Honours I could not be permitted to sit for the examination. My colleagues then revealed that they knew that I had stood first in the subject. This irritated the Principal who said: " It is impossible; I have notified that no one should be told the result," and consulting the result sheet again, he shouted that there had been no mistake and left the room.

My colleagues were upset and sent me a telegram. I immediately returned to Calcutta and went straight to the house of Mr. Percival. Students hardly ever dared to visit him in his house and it was with trepidation that I approached him. He was, however, kind and asked me the reason for my visit. I held out the telegram. He was surprised and said that I had secured very high marks. He referred to his register again and said, " I was right, you have secured the first rank. I prepared the result sheet myself and handed it over to the Principal. The mistake seems to have occurred in the office. See me in college." He immediately left for college and I waited for him outside the office. He went into the Principal's room and traced the mistake. My marks had been entered against the name of another student who had not obtained pass marks in History Honours and his marks had been entered against mine. The Principal expressed his regret and asked Mr. Percival to tell me that I would be permitted to sit for the University Examination. Mr. Percival came out and gave me the good news.

This error cost me two days when I thought every day was precious to me, apart from worry and expense. One good result of this, however, was that the student against whom my marks

had been entered got permission to appear for History Honours. His form had been sent up to the University before the mistake was detected and it was now too late to withdraw the permission. But he worked hard and got through the Honours examination! It was a strange coincidence that in the F.A. also I had had to undergo a similar experience!

As the University Examination drew near I began to worry over my inadequate preparation. I thought that if I failed to top the list I would be giving cause for complaint at home, though I myself did not very much care for this honour. One's rank in the examination was determined by the marks obtained in the Honours course only. I, therefore, paid special attention to Honours subjects and neglected Philosophy in which I had taken only a Pass course. I had not read many books on the subject and thought that I could content myself with listening to Dr. P. K. Roy's lectures. On one occasion I had been justified. Once when Dr. Roy was indisposed and could not take the class, he set some questions and asked the students to write out the answers. He evaluated the papers and announced that mine was the best paper, better even than those of students who had offered Honours in the subject.

On the day before the Philosophy examination, however, I felt as if I had forgotton all I knew and became nervous. I had only one night to revise at least my class notes. But sleep overcame me by the time I had read a page or two and in the morning I was able to make a hurried revision of the notes in Psychology and Ethics only and had no time for Logic. A friend named all the chapters and made a few points about each. Then I had a hurried bath, gulped a few morsels of food and ran to the University. My concern now was that I should at least scrape through Philosophy as failure in it would mean failure in the whole examination. It was with anxiety that I entered the examination hall. When I saw the Psychology and Ethics paper, I thought that I had forgotten everything and was slightly trembling. I tried to calm myself and closed my eyes for a while. Then I looked through the paper and attempted what appeared to be an easy question. Then I tackled another. Confidence returned, and at the end I found I had answered all the questions. Nervousness was gone. When, therefore, after half an hour's recess we got the Logic paper,

:ould, despite my neglect, answer all questions except
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Vhen the results were out, I saw that I had scored the first
ık in History, high marks in English and good marks in
ilosophy. In the aggregate, I topped the list again and was
e to bag two scholarships, one of Rs. 50 and the other of
. 40. Success in this examination was not the result of hard
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12

Students' Conference and the Congress

AFTER taking my B.A. degree, I joined the M.A. and B.L. classes in Calcutta. We Bihari students in Calcutta were much influenced by the swadeshi agitation then in full swing. We often met at the Bihari Club and discussed our part in it. We composed a poem on the subject, and got it printed. It was widely distributed. Someone suggested the need for a students' organisation in Bihar and it was enthusiastically taken up.

We decided to convene a conference of Bihari students and the resolution we passed to this effect at the Bihari Club was acclaimed not only by students but by elders as well. I was charged with a mission to Patna where I met first the students and then prominent people, among whom were Sachchidananda Sinha and the late Mahesh Narain, Editor of *The Bihar Times*. All of them lent their support. It was decided to hold the conference in Patna under the presidentship of the famous barrister, Sharfud-din. The Patna students formed a reception committee and made the necessary arrangements.

The Conference opened in the hall of Patna College. Representatives of most of the schools and colleges of Bihar took part in it. The proceedings were in English. Entrusted with the task of explaining the aims of the Conference, I read out a prepared speech. The Conference decided to set up students' committees in places where there were colleges and later in towns having schools and to have these affiliated with the Conference. A representative body of all the students of Bihar was to be formed with its headquarters in Patna. This body was charged with the task of carrying on the activities of the Conference and controlling and co-ordinating the work of the students' committees.

While the rules and regulations were being drafted, I remember that two points were hotly discussed: (1) whether the Conference should take part in politics and (2) whether the Conference should be confined to Bihari students only or thrown open to Bengali students also.

There was a difference of opinion on the first point and the elders opposed participation in politics. Wisely as it seems now, the Conference decided that it would not take part in political agitation. At that time Bihar was part of Bengal. Educationally it was backward, and had hardly any public life. The students were completely ignorant of current events. Only a small section of the people was supporting the Congress. Bihar had no political organisation of its own, and the Congress had not yet set up its branch there. The Students' Conference, though dominated by youth, was the first platform where Biharis met to discuss questions of common interest. In these circumstances, if we had not proceeded cautiously, the Conference perhaps would not have been the success it was.

There was a difference of opinion on the second point too. Men like me studying in Calcutta were in favour of including the Bengali students also but there was a lot of opposition and it was decided to restrict membership to Biharis. Though for several years in succession a resolution to include the Bengalis was brought forward, it could never be adopted. From the very inception the organisation was known as the Bihari Students' Conference and so it remained. Only after a few years, the rules were modified and "Bihari students" was defined as all students studying in Bihar.

Nowhere else in India had a students' conference been till then established which could be looked to as a guide. We may be said to have blazed a trail in that direction. Branches were opened in nearly all the towns. The Bihari Club of Calcutta was also affiliated to it. When Banaras Hindu University came into existence, a branch was set up there too. These branches organised weekly meetings at which papers were read, speeches made and sports organised. Essays and public-speaking contests were held every year and winners awarded prizes. Girls were admitted and they had separate competitions, including one for sewing. Annual conferences were held in some Bihar towns during Dasahara. These were presided over by well-known men like Sharfud-din, Hasan Imam, Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, Parmeshwar Lal, Deep Narain Sinha and Braj Kishore Prasad of Bihar and Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, Mahatma Gandhi and C. F. Andrews from outside.

Founded in 1906, the Students' Conference held its annual

sessions regularly until the beginning of the non-co-operation movement when its activities slackened because all its front-rank workers joined the bigger agitation.

As long as it lived, the Conference enjoyed the support of students from all over Bihar. Through it the students got their first lessons in practical organisation and in the art of public speaking. All the public workers Bihar produced during these 15 years received inspiration from this Conference. The country as a whole had benefited from the organisation. It was the workers of this Conference from whom Mahatma Gandhi received support when he first visited Bihar. Most of those who later joined the non-co-operation movement had had their training ground here. Today, the leadership of the State is in the hands of those men who got their initiation into public life through the Students' Conference.

The non-co-operation movement demanded a great sacrifice from students. The Conference was not prepared for it. Although a resolution supporting the movement was adopted, not many students could join or remain in the movement. Those who stuck to it through thick and thin were the workers of the Conference. Having played its part up to 1930, the Conference ceased to be a living force. Efforts made to revive it did not succeed, and the organisation which exists today is a new one. In a way, the Conference had accomplished its task: it had created a consciousness in the province and prepared the field for the future.

The Indian National Congress held its annual session in Calcutta in 1906. I served as a volunteer in the session which was a great success. Rightist (moderates) and leftist (extremists) groups had come into being. The leftists were led by Lokamanya Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and others, and the rightists by men like Sir Pherozshah Mehta and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Surendranath Banerjee and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya stood somewhere in between these two groups. As a moderating influence, Dadabhai Naoroji had been invited from England to preside over the session. Luckily, I was put on duty in the Congress pandal and I was able to hear all the discussions of the Subjects Committee. At the open session, doing duty elsewhere, I was not able to hear the presidential speech. It was in this session that

I heard the speeches of Sarojini Devi, Pandit Malaviya and M. A. Jinnah for the first time.

After this session, I felt drawn towards the Congress, but did not join it formally until 1911 when again the annual session was held in Calcutta. I was then elected a member of the All-India Congress Committee and to this day I have remained a member.

The Congress was then a loose organisation. In Bihar only a few people were connected with it and these were mostly lawyers. A Provincial Congress Committee separate from that of Bengal was set up in 1907 or 1908, though Bihar came into being as a separate province only in 1912. Bihar never went unrepresented in the Congress sessions. Even if the elected representatives could not attend the session, the Secretary nominated the representatives.

I had done nothing particular for the Congress till then, but probably because of my consistent performance in the University Examinations and of my activities in the Students' Conference, many people of Bihar knew me and pushed me up to the A.-I.C.C. at one bound.

13

Unsuccessful Attempt To Go Abroad

AFTER I passed my B.A. my brother and I discussed my future. The Dawn Society and the Swadeshi agitation had made a deep impression on me and there was an urge to serve the country. How exactly I should serve it we could not decide. I felt that I should not go in for Government service, and therefore did not want to apply—my brother was also of the same mind—for the post of Deputy Magistrate as some people had advised me to do. My father wanted me to take up the legal profession, so I continued my studies in Calcutta for the M.A. and the B.L. My brother, meanwhile, not having passed the M.A. examination and not wanting to be a burden on the family, did not continue his studies and joined the Dumraon Raj School as a teacher.

After setting up the Students' Conference, contrary to my wish not to enter Government service, I began to be obsessed by a new idea: to go to England somehow and pass the I.C.S. examination. Surprisingly, my brother also approved of this idea. As father could not afford to undertake the expenses, we had to think of alternative means of meeting them.

When Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha heard of this, he felt happy and offered to help. Braj Kishore Prasad also heartily approved. After Dr. Ganesh's dinner, Braj Kishore Prasad gave great encouragement to Ambika Charan to go to Japan. He now seriously started collecting funds for my trip to England. Munshi Ishwar Saran and Rai Bahadur Harihar Prasad Sinha of Arrah gave us some money. My brother said that once I reached England he would somehow be able to manage to send me more money with the help of these friends or from home. As we thought that our parents would not fall in with the idea, the whole project was kept a secret, and it was decided to reveal it only after my departure from India's shores.

I applied for a passport. I had a couple of suits made by an English tailoring house in Calcutta for my use in England. This was the only occasion after 1898 for me to buy foreign

cloth. In connection with the collection of funds, Braj Kishore Prasad, my brother and I visited Allahabad. We stayed with Munshi Ishwar Saran. Some boys of my father-in-law's family were studying in a college there. Though we did not meet any of them, they somehow came to know the purpose of our visit. They came to Munshi Ishwar Saran's house and asked for me but I happened to be out. They sent a telegram to my father that I was preparing to go abroad clandestinely and that at the moment I was in Allahabad. My people were alarmed. As my father was not in good health, my mother and sister rushed to Allahabad, thinking that I would be going direct to Bombay to board the ship. But after a day's stay, I had left for Calcutta. So they returned to Zeradei.

At Calcutta I received a telegram stating that father was seriously ill. I immediately rushed to Zeradei and there I was surprised to find that though father was really unwell, it was not so serious as to demand my immediate presence. While I was thus puzzled, in came my brother. Then it dawned on me that the cat was out of the bag. Everyone started crying and father started scolding my brother for " conspiring to send me away to England. " He then turned to me and said that his health was none too good and that if I left India that would hasten his end. I confessed our plans and gave my word that I would not now go against his wishes. On my promise, father allowed me to return to Calcutta.

When preparations were almost complete in Calcutta for my departure, a small incident occurred. All my friends who shared my secret plans were crazy about going to England. They thought that they might get an opportunity later and would reach there after I settled down. One day one of my friends suggested that we should go and see an astrologer about prospects of going abroad. Accordingly, we went to see him. The old Brahmin, as soon as we entered his house, claimed to know the purpose of our visit. We, therefore, asked him if our wishes would be fulfilled. Looking at me, he said that my desire would be fulfilled later in life and not just then. Then he turned to my friend, Shukdev Prasad Verma, and said: " Your desire is going to be fulfilled very soon." In like fashion he told the future to the others.

Giving him a rupee, we left him, but as we came out we

had a hearty laugh at the old man and his ignorance. I had made all preparations, how could I not go? And Shukdev, who had not even the remotest idea of this sort, would he be going out soon? We pitied the poor astrologer.

But the next day came the telegram from Zeradei. When I came back down-hearted from the village, I told Shukdev of the turn of events. He felt very sorry indeed. Then suddenly he got the idea. " Now that your trip is definitely cancelled, why should I not go? " he asked. I immediately fell in with the idea and said that my clothes and the money collected for my trip were there at his disposal. In five minutes the matter was decided. In a few days he left for England with my clothes and money!

In his case, the plans were a well-kept secret. Even his near relatives in Calcutta were unaware of them. Only a few friends went to Howrah to see him off for Bombay. Only when we got the news of the sailing of his ship were his people informed of his departure. The astrologer's prediction had come true!

14

End of Student Career

AFTER Shukdev had left Calcutta came the Congress annual session, where, as already mentioned, I worked as a volunteer. Then I began to get busy with my studies. My father continued to be in bed and his ailment took a serious turn. On hearing the news , I went to Zeradei where my brother had also arrived from Dumraon. A few days later, in March 1907, father passed away. At his death bed was assembled the whole family. He was happy that all of us were able to be near him in his last moments. At that time my brother had two daughters and a son named Janardan. A son was born to me that very year, and he was named Mrityunjaya. Father was very fond of his grandchildren. One of his last acts was to gather them all in his arms and bless them.

My father's death cast a gloom over us, and the household affairs were thrown in a state of confusion. I felt happy, however, that I had not gone to England after all. Had I gone and had my father died while I was away, I cannot imagine how miserable I would have felt.

Some days later I left for Calcutta and my brother for Dumraon. My brother was already looking after household affairs and now they became his sole responsibility. So he had to go to Zeradei more frequently. He arranged for my expenses and saw to it that I never had to suffer for want of money. Even when my father was alive, he was particular that I should have no worry about money. He felt that because I was good at my studies and had passed university examinations so creditably, I should concentrate only on studies and I should have no anxieties to distract me.

The scholarships I got were of substantial value, but neither father nor brother ever took them into account while making remittances for my monthly expenses. They saw to it that I was above want. From what they sent me I paid my college fees and hostel dues. Whatever was left was spent on books. After the B.A. Examination I got two scholarships, one of Rs. 50 a month which I spent as I got ; the other of Rs. 40

a month for 12 months was awarded after the M.A. in a lump sum. On passing I got Rs. 480 and I paid the debts I had incurred when obsessed by the idea of going to England.

As I have said earlier, after passing the F.A. I became indifferent to examinations. In fact, I do not know how I came out first in the B.A. My indifference increased while doing my M.A. The I.C.S. obsession, my father's death and my extra-collegiate activities had made inroads into my time. My mind was not at ease. My father had died in March. My M.A. Examination was to come off in December. I went to Kurseong along with some friends for the summer holidays and prepared for the examination. I did not stand first in the University in the M.A. I had no regrets as I had made no special effort and entertained no hope for attaining the first place.

What next? was the question facing me. After the examination I went to my brother at Dumraon and stayed there for some time. I was undecided about taking the B.L. examination. The legal profession did not attract me. I also felt that I might not be able to make any headway in it; I was losing confidence in myself.

Baidyanath Narayan Sinha, a friend of mine who was working in the Muzaffarpur College, suggested that I should take a teaching appointment in his college. I applied and was immediately accepted. I joined the college staff in July 1908. I began to like the work and came to know most of the people there. But brother was not quite satisfied with my lot and as, gradually, the financial position of the college began to deteriorate, it was decided that I should once again take up Law. I had finished the course, but did not appear for the examination. So, after ten months in Muzaffarpur, I returned to Calcutta to appear for the examination and start practising.

Thus ended my student career and I entered the struggle of life. When I look back on my student days, they appear to belong to a golden age: I had no worries and I had the best of opportunities. I had one great facility: I had a brother who guided me and who inspired in me all the best ideas and ideals that I came to cherish. Sometimes I regret that I had not made the fullest use of these advantages.

In Chapra and later in Calcutta I always had good friends. As far as I remember I never had any quarrel with anyone.

With a few, my relations were very intimate and have remained so even afterwards. Although there was always keen competition and rivalry among the students, we were always on the best of terms. Often I prepared for examinations along with those who were considered my rivals and we helped each other.

Calcutta opened my eyes to the world and the days I spent in the Eden Hindu Hostel proved to be of great advantage to me. Probably nowhere else could I have had the facility of mixing so freely with Bengali students as I had in the Eden Hindu Hostel. My relations with them were always most cordial and friendly. I think the days I spent with them were among my happiest days. I picked up Bengali without an effort. I have many Bengali friends all over Bengal even today. When many years after my student days I toured Bengal during the civil disobedience movement, I met old friends wherever I went and we spent a happy time, with nostalgic memories.

When, in 1938-39, I became Congress President, the Bengali-Bihari question once again cropped up in Bihar. I had to take certain steps in the Congress organisation which the people of Bengal did not particularly like. I became a target of bitter criticism, vilification and abuse. But I never felt any hostility, nor have ever been motivated by narrow rivalry or any but the most friendly considerations towards them. How could it be otherwise? Can one forget such long companionship, affectionate relations and sweet memories of the past? If as a matter of duty I had to undertake a task which was not liked by others, I never failed to ask myself whether I was right. My conscience has invariably told me that I have never, knowingly and consciously, harmed anyone just for the sake of harming him. Be that as it may, my memories of Calcutta will never fade. I can never forget the contribution which Bengal has made to my life during the 15 years of my stay in Calcutta.

In Calcutta I grew intimate with many Biharis also. When I first went to Calcutta there were not many Bihari students there, but gradually their number increased and in later years it became fairly large. We met in the Bihari Club every week. We were so much dominated by caste considerations that we had a separate kitchen for us in the Hindu Hostel where a Bihari Brahmin prepared our food. Although I had joined

Dr. Ganesh Prasad in his dinner, I must confess to my faith in caste restrictions then. After all, he was of my own caste. In Bihar we did not take food, particularly cereals, cooked by certain castes. I observed the restriction scrupulously even in the hostel. Though I stayed there for a long time, I did not take cooked rice or pulses in the Bengali mess even once.

Among my many Bihari friends, some of whom I still come across during my tours in Bihar, are: Avadhesh Prasad and Jagannath Prasad of Shikarpur, Champaran district; Shukdev Prasad Verma of Shahabad; Krishna Prasad of Bhagalpur; Badrinath Varma; Balbhadra Prasad Jyotishi of Ranchi; Dr. Sadhu Sinha, Dr. Rajeshwar Prasad, Batuk Dev Prasad Varma and Vindyavasini Prasad Varma and others. Some of these friends have left us, some of them are still living. The families of Avadhesh Prasad and mine have come closer through matrimonial ties.

15
I Prepare for Law

I CAME back to Calcutta in March 1909. For the B.L., there were two examinations. One I passed immediately on arrival; then I began to prepare for the other. For being allowed to practise at the High Court one had to be apprenticed to a lawyer for two years and then go through a test conducted by judges themselves.

It was my desire to work under an able lawyer. A friend of mine took me to Khan Bahadur Shamsul Huda. He already had two apprentices and according to the rules he could not have more. He agreed to take me as soon as a vacancy arose but in the meantime wanted to attach me to someone else. He found me a place with Jahadur Rahim Zahid who was also a good lawyer. After some time Jahadur Rahim Zahid went to England and returned as a barrister. Later he became a Judge of the High Court. He then added Suhrawardy to his name, and was generally known as Justice Suhrawardy.

While working as an articled clerk I made up my mind to study law—which I had held in great awe — thoroughly, and so I worked hard. For two years I would have no income but I did not want to burden my brother. Therefore, in the beginning I found work as a professor in City College. Soon I had to give this up. Then I began to coach a student and the income was enough for my monthly expenses. The boy whom I taught was the son of Justice Digambar Chatterjee. This served me as a nice introduction to a judge before starting my practice.

When Khan Bahadur Shamsul Huda had a vacancy, I joined him. Here, as before, I did not waste my time as articled clerks generally did, aiming only at passing the formal examination and becoming High Court lawyers. Every day I reached Khan Bahadur Huda's house early and went through the papers connected with the cases on hand. Then, as directed by him, I prepared my own notes on those cases, citing appropriate precedents. He soon found the notes to be helpful as, to a large extent, they obviated the necessity of a junior lawyer for him.

I lived then in a mess which was far away from the Khan Bahadur's residence. I had to ride in a tram car and then walk for about a mile. Despite this, I would be at his place by 7 in the morning to work with him till 10 when I would return to my mess. After my meal I would be at the High Court at 1 p.m. every day and hear cases being argued. Particularly of interest to me were the cases for which I had prepared notes. From the court I would go to Bhavanipore, four miles away from my mess, for the tuition and it used to be 9 or 10 in the night before I returned home. I thus worked hard and learnt the work well.

Later Khan Bahadur Huda said that as coming and going was very inconvenient for me, he would make the necessary arrangements for me to shift to his house. He gave me a room and a kitchen and I began to live with him. He would send for me either at night or early in the morning as he wanted. He would take me to court with him in his own carriage. Our relations became so intimate that he began to look upon me as a member of his own family.

Huda was a famous lawyer and was considered a leader of the Muslims. He was once elected President of the Muslim League. He was a member of the University Senate and also of the Legislative Council. Later he became a member of the Bengal Governor's Executive Council and then a Judge of the High Court. For some time he was also President of the Legislative Council.

He was held in high esteem both by the Judges and his clients. He had a very good practice and always had many briefs in hand. A man of a religious bent of mind and extremely good-hearted, he always offered some scholarships to Muslim students. Some students took food regularly in his house.

It will not be out of place to mention here a small incident. While I was living with him, we had the festival of Bakr-Id. The area in which Khan Bahadur Huda lived was predominantly Muslim and I feared that in his house or in the neighbourhood a cow might be slaughtered for sacrifice. So I thought it would be best if I made myself scarce for a few days. So, on the eve of the festival, I quietly slipped out and returned only four days later. Khan Bahadur Huda asked me where I had gone and I answered that I had been to a friend.

He immediately replied: " I know you went away because of Bakr-Id. You probably wanted to avoid being present during a cow sacrifice. Have you not been unfair to me? You are my articled clerk. I have several Hindu servants in my house; the gardener and the servant who tends the cows are Hindus. Do you think I am so callous as not to think of their sentiments, not to speak of yours? Could I have given pain to them? You should have asked me before leaving. In view of the Hindu servants in my house, cow sacrifice is never done here. "

I felt guilty and realised that I had been unfair to him. The anti-Partition agitation was going on then, and Bengali Muslims were opposed to it. In East Bengal, to which Khan Bahadur Huda belonged, Hindu-Muslim riots had also occurred. He himself was in favour of the partition of Bengal. In spite of all this such were his feelings, and his treatment of me was kind and considerate.

I passed the B.L. Examination. I did not stand high as I could not devote much time to my studies. When I was about to finish my apprenticeship, rumours of the Khan Bahadur's impending appointment as a member of the Governor's Executive Council began to circulate. There must have been some basis for them, for he one day told me that he might not be in a position to help me in setting up my practice. But I thought I had learnt a good deal and should be able to stand on my own.

In August 1911 I started practising. On the first day the Khan Bahadur got me a case. He accompanied me to the court room and sat beside me and heard me argue. The High Court remained open only for a few days and then closed for the Durga Puja holidays. I left for Bihar before the holidays began. At that time Madan Mohan Malaviya was touring Bihar to raise funds for Banaras Hindu University. For some days I joined him and gave him some help. When the High Court reopened, I returned to Calcutta. Now rumours of Khan Bahadur Huda's appointment became stronger than ever. Clients had understood that he would not be practising any longer. Meanwhile many cases had accumulated and they were filed. Some of the cases which came up for hearing were passed on to me; they were not of any great help financially. Khan Bahadur Huda told me that he would not be there any

longer to help me, but the cases he had passed on to n
remain with me and he added that if I worked satis
clients would continue to engage me.

A few days later, one of these cases came up for
The clients themselves had not engaged me and ha
another lawyer, but as the *vakalatnama* bore my signa
my name was also included in the list. I had studied th
and prepared the case thoroughly. Many legal poi
in the case. As my senior lawyer had not gone very
them, I helped him with my notes and indicated one p
after another relevant to the case. Sir Ashutosh M
Judge of the court, was observing all this and after so
he asked me if I had any other precedent to quote so
might call for books for reference. Then he delivere
judgment in our favour, which appeared in the Rep

I had all but forgotten the case when, two days
lawyer with whom I often worked and who was a m
the University Syndicate, asked me if I would like to
a professor in the Law College. This came to me as a
because I had never asked anyone for such an appo
I never thought that a lawyer like me, with only tw
experience, was entitled to such a post. My friend told
Sir Ashutosh, who was also the Vice-Chancellor of the
sity, had been pleased with me in some case in whic
appeared in his court. He advised me to see him. I, t
went to him and in a few days I got the appointment.

It gave me an opportunity to study thoroughly many
of law which helped me a great deal in the professio
not yet make much money from the cases I got. But
had helped me get a job! When, during my appren
I used to coach Justice Digambar Chatterjee's son, I h
to know the judge, but not very well. He knew that I h
brilliant academic career and that was why he had
me to coach his son. When he came to know that I w
to start practising, he asked me if I had any lawyer
my relatives. I replied in the negative. (Several relativ
father-in-law were working as lawyers but they were p
in Uttar Pradesh.) Justice Chatterjee said it was a goo
Surprised because of my impression that if I had a
in the profession he might help me and get me case

the Judge that his remark was intriguing. Whereupon he replied:

" You should consider yourself lucky that none of your relatives is a lawyer, especially a good lawyer. If you had one, you might have got some cases through him, but a client would never have engaged you himself thinking that he had just obliged a senior lawyer. Not having any trust in or regard for you, he would invariably engage a senior lawyer. Thinking that another man has to do the arguing, you might not take pains to study cases. Your interest might flag as you would be getting little opportunity for arguing and conducting cases. If later on through hard work you became a good lawyer, the clients would come and remind you that in the beginning they had helped you. You would feel a sense of obligation towards them and charge them less. That is the way of rich clients.

" If a poor client came to you, you would not pay proper attention to him, because you had rich clients, whether the rich clients paid you well or not and whether the responsibility to argue the case was yours or someone else's.

" If you have no relatives among lawyers to help you, you will not get rich clients. Poor clients will come to you with the idea that you are well educated. They may pay you very little, but will surely entrust you with the entire case and will not think of employing another senior man. You will, therefore, be preparing your case yourself and will apply your mind to studying the case fully. If you win the case for him, this client will work virtually as your advertising agent. Then other poor clients will also flock to you. This will pave the way to fame. For this you will neither have to depend on anyone nor feel obliged to anyone. Then big clients will start coming automatically. In fact, they will cajole you to take their cases, they will not be able to talk of any obligations and you will be in a position to make your own terms with them. Therefore, you should learn to work hard on your cases. You will be a successful lawyer. "

Justice Chatterjee's talk gave me great encouragement. Every word of his came true. In the beginning I got only poor clients. From the very outset I got opportunities of working without anyone's assistance. I worked hard and I gained

valuable experience. Among my clients only a fe described as rich, and they came to me because v a way, relatives.

While I was serving my apprenticeship, an incide which it is necessary to mention here. The whole my life would have altered, but that did not happe it was for the good that that half-dreamt dream di true. The incident was my meeting with Gopa Gokhale.

16

I Meet Gokhale

WHILE I was an articled clerk, one day a barrister friend, Parameshwar Lal, told me that Gopal Krishna Gokhale was in Calcutta and that he wanted to see Sri Krishna Prasad and myself. I was intrigued by Gokhale's desiring to see a nonentity like me and wanted to know how he could have known me. Parameshwar Lal informed me that Gokhale wanted to contact a few promising Bihari students and that he himself had mentioned our names to him. The fact was that Sri Krishna Prasad and I had played a leading part in the Bihar Students' Conference and a good number of people knew us. That was why Parameshwar Lal had mentioned our names.

Both of us went to see Gokhale. He had only recently established the Servants of India Society and he wanted a few able young men of Bihar to join it. After laying stress on service to the country, he pressed us to join the Society. He said he knew that both of us had been good students and were now preparing for entering the Bar. He said, " It is possible that you may do well in the legal profession, amass wealth and lead a life of plenty and luxury. You may live in a big bungalow, keep a carriage, and possess all the paraphernalia which is the hallmark of the rich. But, remember," he intoned, raising his index finger, " the country has also a claim on its young men. And since you have had a nice record, the claim on such as you is all the stronger. "

Then, touching a personal note, he observed: " I come of a poor family. My people had great hopes that after completing my education I would earn a lot and be able to make all of them happy. When, throwing cold water over all their hopes, I dedicated my life to the country's service, my brother felt so annoyed that, for some time, he did not even talk to me. But soon after, when he as well as the others in my family realised what my work meant, they began to love me as before. Maybe, you are similarly circumstanced, but be sure that eventually all your people will worship you. They have many hopes in

you, but suppose you die, will they not adjust themselves to it somehow? "

He spoke in this strain for nearly two hours. His words, uttered with soul-deep sincerity, made a deep impression on us. Knowing the effect he had made on us, he said: " It is a serious question. Think it over and then let me know your views. " We then left his place, lost in thought and speechless. For days we could think of nothing else.

Both of us pondered over his proposal. I could not relish my food and spent sleepless nights. During the Swadeshi agitation we had sometimes thought of the country and the sentiment of patriotism had gained the upper hand, but not till now had the issue been posed before us in such a clear-cut manner nor did we have the good fortune of hearing such remarkable words from such a great man. The call of the country and the call of the family pulled in different directions. I was the father of two sons and my brother had four children. How could I pass on the burden of supporting the family to my brother? Our mother was alive. What would she think of my walking out of the family? and what a shock it would be to my wife and others. These thoughts seized my mind to the exclusion of everything else.

My brother happened to be with me at the time, but I did not disclose my mental turmoil to him, nor to anyone else. For some days I did not go to the High Court or move out even for a walk. My only desire was to sit in solitude and think and think. This went on for about ten days and my brother got suspicious and questioned me, but I was evasive. In my state of indecision I could not broach the subject to him.

After ten days of serious thought, I decided that I should abide by Gokhale's wishes and join the Society. But I could not muster enough courage to tell my brother. So I wrote a long letter, asking for his approval of my decision, and placing the letter on his bed when he was away, I slipped out into College Square and sat there waiting. My brother read the letter and started looking for me but was unable to find me. When I returned to the mess in the evening, I found him in a miserable state but he did not speak to me that night. I did not attempt to talk to him either. I realised that he was tortured by the same thoughts; while he heartily desired that

I should go ahead, he found himself unable to shoulder the burden of such a big family. In the morning, he could control himself no longer and burst into tears. I too could not restrain mine. We both wept. He then hugged me and tried to console me. I did not utter a word. I knew what tormented him. At last it was considered best to go home and consult mother, aunt and sister.

Before doing so, however, I went to Gokhale and related the whole thing to him. I told him what I felt; that it would not be possible for me to cut myself adrift from my family and that I would like to take their permission. By now he had given up hope and said nothing. Sri Krishna wanted to go over to Poona and see things for himself before taking the final plunge. Gokhale liked the idea and agreed. Sri Krishna went to live in Poona for some time, but in the end he decided not to join the Society. He is now no more.

Reaching Zeradei, my brother and I told our people the whole story. Deeply moved, mother said nothing. But my sister, who has always been the outspoken member of our family, said: " By talking of going to England, you made father miserable. Now by talking of becoming a recluse at this age, you want to make your brother unhappy. " She then burst into tears and the whole household started weeping. This completely killed whatever enthusiasm I had for the idea.

I returned to Calcutta. But for several weeks I could not get over my unhappiness. I had given up the idea but I was miserable. I never felt like appearing for the B.L. Examination and the result was that I could not score high and just passed it.

17
· The Custom of Dowry

Soon after my unsuccessful attempt to join the Servants of India Society, my mother died. I had gone to Zeradei for the Dasahara holidays. My mother, who was in the habit of performing puja in the evening during Kartik, took her usual bath before the puja and caught a cold which developed into bronchitis. We gave her the best of treatment, but after five days' illness she passed away. According to custom, as the younger son I performed all the funeral rites.

My brother's elder daughter was now quite grown up and we wanted to arrange her marriage. Negotiations were going on while my mother was alive. A girl's marriage in our society is a nerve-racking affair. It is not easy to get a suitable boy, because the choice is limited on account of caste and sub-caste restrictions. The financial position of the party has also to be looked into. Because of early marriage the boy is generally dependent on others at the time of his marriage. Therefore, the burden of keeping and bringing up the wife falls on the boy's family. Hence the importance of ascertaining that family's financial status. I was myself married when I was thirteen. Although I was now in my twenty-sixth year, except for a few months when I served as a professor at Muzaffarpur, I had not earned anything. My brother too had not been able to save anything. What little he earned as a school teacher was just enough to maintain him at Dumraon. Our mainstay, therefore, was the income from our zamindari. My brother had managed the estate well, and we had tided over the difficulties which stared us in the face at the time of father's death. But now a girl's marriage was a very expensive affair.

If a suitable boy and the right kind of family were available, it was never easy to obtain their acceptance. The question of satisfying the boy did not arise then; parents' approval was considered enough. (Things have changed considerably since.) But the parents desired full satisfaction as regards the status and position of the girl's family. When all these things were

settled to the parties' mutual satisfaction, then only the question of betrothal arose.

The parents of the bride have to offer cash, utensils, clothes and other presents at the time of the *tilak* (betrothal). They have to offer cash and many other things when the bridegroom's marriage party arrives. It is the duty of the father to provide well for his daughter, but in our society these dowries are not voluntary. This bad custom still persists in spite of the reformists' efforts. All caste and communal organisations adopt resolutions against it, but instead of disappearing, this custom is becoming more prevalent. Even the castes amongst whom the practice did not exist have taken to it lately, and in those circles where it had been prevalent, it has taken deeper roots.

According to the custom prevalent today, for a man of my academic record and profession, a dowry of ten to fifteen thousand rupees would not be considered too much, whereas when I was actually married, we got just over two thousand. The rates of dowry have been increased and are progressively increasing. Boys who are mere paupers but have managed to receive some education do not hesitate to demand three or four thousand rupees. There is one great difference between the customs of today and those of fifty years ago. Then the parents' approval was enough, but today in addition to the parents', the boy's approval has also to be sought, and as a result of their two separate demands, the dowry has come to be heavier.

We were negotiating to marry brother's daughter into a family known to us; the elder brothers of the boy were our colleagues in Calcutta. We had, therefore, hoped that everything would be settled satisfactorily without difficulty, but old customs die hard and we had to pass through a trying period. Ultimately, the marriage was settled. Although we were considered well-to-do, we had no hard cash. Foodgrains we obtained from our fields, but cash was a different matter. So my brother and I had to incur a debt for this marriage. By the grace of God it has proved a good relationship and a good match.

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Legal Practice

When I set up my legal practice soon after my niece's marriage I began getting cases early enough for a beginner and I became independent financially and never had to ask for remittances from home. My brother's difficulties had increased after his daughter's marriage and I did not want to add to them. Rich litigants did not come to me, but there was one exception. Rai Bahadur Harihar Prasad Sinha, who knew me and had offered help when I wanted to go to England, entrusted me with the entire legal work in respect of his zamindari from the day I started practice. The last brief I held as a lawyer was also in a big litigation in which he was involved.

I worked hard and single-handed in poor litigants' cases. Some of the judges came to know me and were pleased with my handling of the cases. Some lawyers are in the habit of calling on judges but I never did so, the only place where I met them being the courtroom. Sir Lawrence Jenkins, the then Chief Justice, who retired a year after I started practising, was so pleased with me that when he left Calcutta he presented me with an autographed portrait of himself. Sir Ashutosh had offered me the professorship in the Law College. I had thus reason to feel gratified with my success.

Meanwhile came the announcement, on the occasion of the Coronation in 1911, separating Bihar from Bengal, and in April 1912 Bihar became a separate province. For some time it did not have a separate High Court and University. All the cases of Bihar were heard in Calcutta and its students also sat for the Calcutta University examinations. The move for a separate High Court, however, started very soon, and the fears that this proposal would be shelved because of the war with Germany proved groundless.

My old colleague in the Muzaffarpur College, Baidyanath Narayan Sinha, had also started practising in the Calcutta High Court. We became very close friends.

Baidyanath suggested that we take the M.L. Examination.

I was fully engrossed in my practice and was determined to make a success of it. I feared that my studies would interfere with my work, but I accepted my friend's advice and both of us began preparing for the examination, which was considered to be the most difficult of the examinations conducted by Calcutta University. We had little time for study, and I had the additional work of teaching in the Law College. Sometimes I felt like dropping the whole idea, but Baidyanath would not let me do it. He kept on goading me, reading out books to me like a teacher. He said: " You have secured the first rank in all examinations from the Entrance to the B.A. In the M.A. you failed to maintain that rank and in the B.L. you have just managed to pass. You can wipe out this blot on your otherwise unsullied record only by your appearing for the M.L. Examination and securing a high rank." Thanks to this logic and the pains Baidyanath took for me, I set about studying earnestly.

The examination was to come off in December 1915. Never before had I worked so hard as for this examination. Added to my usual routine, this put such a strain on me that I fell seriously ill. I feared that everything would now go awry. Patna was to have its separate High Court in March 1916. Both of us realised that if we failed to take the test while living in Calcutta, we would never be able to do it after shifting to Patna. This was our last chance. Therefore, we stuck to our resolve. I recovered from my illness, as if by sheer determination.

For the examination we managed to get some time off by having our cases adjourned. Most of our cases were from Bihar and they were generally entrusted to judges who were likely to be transferred to Patna. All of them were kind enough to agree to our request.

After the examination, we left for Patna, where we learnt of our results. We were both successful, Baidyanath getting a second class and I a first class. I learnt later that I had scored very high marks. We were the first two Biharis to have passed this examination. According to University rules, one could get a Doctorate in Law after passing M.L. by submitting a thesis. Both of us thought of submitting theses and, in this connection, we consulted Sir Gurudass Banerjee in the choice of the subjects.

I recollect a number of interesting anecdotes about Calcutta during the early days of my practice. At the beginning of my career, the manager of a client came to me to file an appeal. He desired to engage a senior counsel, and wanted me to assist the counsel. He mentioned the name of a senior lawyer who commanded a good practice, and used to take up mostly Bihar cases but whom I did not know personally. I felt happy at the prospect of working with a senior lawyer of his reputation.

One evening, having prepared a rough draft of the appeal, we went to that lawyer's residence. Usually he never worked at night and liked to finish his work by the evening. He was just winding up his work for the day and when the manager, who was already known to him, told the lawyer the purpose of his visit, the latter asked him to come the next day. Then he inquired whether the manager had got the draft of the appeal prepared by a junior counsel and the manager replied in the affirmative, mentioning me as the junior counsel. As soon as he heard my name, he shouted: " You seem to have engaged a funny person as junior counsel whose name I have never heard. For aught I know, he knows nothing and will not prove of any assistance. Everything will have to be done by me. " The manager told him that the junior counsel was, no doubt, a fresher, but at the same time a brilliant man. The lawyer repeated his uncomplimentary remarks about me. Then the manager pointed to me, sitting there quietly by his side, as the junior counsel in question. Greatly embarrassed, the counsel stuttered: " You should have met me as soon as you came. I do not know you. My remarks were not meant to disparage you because I hardly know you. I said so since I felt that a fresher was hardly likely to know much about this work. " Then he apologised to me. I replied that as he did not know me and as, undoubtedly, I was a fresher, his remarks were quite justified. Arranging to meet him the next day, we took leave of him.

When, the following day, he saw the appeal drafted by me, he felt very pleased and began to praise me before the other lawyers. I came into closer touch with him and he was very good to me. His one complaint was that I was careless about my clothes and outward bearing. He disliked this and

never ceased advising me to be fastidious in the matter of dress.

I was reluctant then, as I am still, to go out of my way to meet anyone whom I did not know. Although I had been practising for two years or so, I had not met Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh. Though I had once won a case in which he held the brief of the opposite party, I had no opportunity of meeting him. A case from Bihar gave me this opportunity. The counsels on our side were Rash Behari Ghosh and Kulwant Sahay, who subsequently became a judge of the Patna High Court, and on the opposite side was Sir S. P. Sinha.

Senior barristers and advocates often attended court only when they had to argue the case. Having too many cases on hand, at the time of the other side's arguments they were generally preoccupied with cases in other courts. Sometimes they could not attend even for replying to the arguments, in which case, the junior counsel had to attend to them. In the case which I won against Sir Rash Behari, our senior counsel was preoccupied with another case and I had to argue it.

The Gaya case was a complicated one in which the arguments of the opposite side continued for four days. Sir S. P. Sinha argued slowly and with great clarity. Being the junior-most counsel on our side, it was my duty to take notes of the arguments. I was quick in writing, a habit which I acquired early in life and which I further improved in my college days when I used to take down full notes of the lectures of Prof. Percival, a fast speaker, and of the lectures in the Dawn Society. I had, therefore, taken full notes of Sir S. P. Sinha's arguments.

The next day I went to Sir Rash Behari's house with these elaborate notes. While he was scanning them, I felt nervous as to what his reaction would be. A temperamental man, he was often cross with his juniors in whom he could not tolerate any slackness. His juniors were, therefore, always in panic when they faced him. Even judges knew this weakness of his. Sometimes he would throw a book or papers he would be reading in the Court at a junior. Therefore, when I was watching him with fear, he looked up from the notes and asked me who had prepared them. Thinking that they were not to his satisfaction, I could not get myself to reply to him. But Kulwant Sahay, who was also there, said that the notes were mine. Then

Sir Rash Behari asked me: " Since when have you been working? I do not know you at all. " Now I was convinced that I had committed some blunder and was speechless. Again Kulwant Sahay replied that I had started work only recently. My relief could be imagined when Sir Rash Behari, far from feeling angry, patted me on my back and said the notes were excellent. Kulwant Sahay intervened to speak of my good academic record. Rash Behari Ghosh was obviously very pleased and said: " If you put in hard work like this, you will go far. "

After this whenever I had to work with Sir Rash Behari Ghosh, he always relied on my notes and made the fullest use of them. I was the witness of his anger at a lawyer in this very case. Once while going through the notes, he enquired if there was any evidence on record in support of a particular contention. I kept quiet, but the advocate from Gaya, who had worked in the case in the lower court also, replied that there was none. Sir Rash Behari Ghosh said it could not be so since Sir S. P. Sinha had averred that there was such evidence. He then asked the Gaya advocate to go through the papers again and tell him the next day. But the next day the Gaya lawyer gave the same reply. Rash Behari, who had himself studied the papers and made certain marginal notes, lost his temper and threw away his notes, saying, " How can I rely on your notes in future? " After showing him his own marginal notes, Sir Rash Behari made some very harsh remarks. I could not help feeling gratified that no such mistakes had been committed by me.

After the M.L. Examination, before I returned to Patna, I had a small but complicated case which I had to argue before two judges, both of whom were to be later transferred to Patna, and which I won. The judges were well impressed. When they came to Patna they praised me highly to others and said that the advocates coming to Patna from Calcutta were very promising and would be able to hold their own against senior local lawyers.

In a second appeal, only legal arguments are permissible. Facts of the case as found by the lower court have to be taken for granted. Only minor cases came up in second appeal. In Calcutta, I got mostly second appeals of poor clients. I had

to be well up in law to be able to argue on legal points in such appeals. I had made it a rule never to accept a case unless I was fully satisfied that the lower court's decision was wrong in law and I could hope to get it reversed by the High Court. Therefore, I won most of my second appeals.

Further, in second appeals, there is a short preliminary hearing before the court, satisfied that there has been a mistake of law which provides a basis for argument, admits and issues notice to the other side to be present. The Registrar of the Patna High Court, who was not well up in law and who was authorised to put up cases for hearing by the judges if he thought there was a case for admission, used to reject many of my appeals at the preliminary stage. But under rules his rejection was not final and he had to refer it to the judges for final orders. Many of my appeals went up to the judges in this manner and nearly all of them were admitted by them. The two judges referred to above, perhaps, did not even go through the papers put up by me. I also saw that cases which I declined to take up because of some inherent weakness in them were lost in the court when put up there by other lawyers.

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Public Service

In Calcutta, even after I started my legal career, I continued my association with the Bihari Students' Conference. The students had faith in me and accepted me as one of them. I was elected president of the Students' Conference which met in Monghyr, where the Nathan Committee's Report on a University for Bihar was opposed. I attended the sessions of the Conference every year and took an active part in its work.

That was also the time I was drawn towards Hindi. I had studied Sanskrit for a year or two in the lower classes at school. Then I started learning Persian as father wanted me to study for law and thought that Persian, being the language of legal documents, would help me. I tried to study Sanskrit privately but did not make much headway so that both at school and college I was a student of Persian. I had no opportunity to study Hindi and was only familiar with the Devnagari alphabet. I had seen mother and others reading the Ramayana regularly. I also developed an interest in reading it and for some time I would not take my breakfast before I had done my daily reading of the Ramayana. I had not read any other Hindi book. In the University there used to be a special translation paper in which an English passage had to be translated into an Indian language and vice versa. In the Entrance and F.A. examinations I had offered Urdu for this paper but for the B.A. in which examination an essay also had to be written in vernacular, I offered Hindi and passed the examination too. This was the beginning of my interest in the language, which was heightened by some developments in Calcutta.

There were many writers, scholars and lovers of Hindi in Calcutta. Amongst them was Jagannath Prasad Chaturvedi of Bihar, who frequented the Bihari Club. I came to know also Umapati Dutt Sharma, the Principal of the Vishudhananda Saraswati Vidyalaya, also from Bihar, and through these two many other lovers of Hindi. A Hindi Sahitya Parishad was established in the city, in the activities of which I began to take part. I do not remember when it was established but

at some of its meetings I remember to have read papers which were appreciated by Hindi litterateurs. Many of us felt the need for an All-India Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. All Hindi enthusiasts welcomed the idea. Eventually, the first session of the Sammelan was held at Banaras under the presidentship of Pandit Malaviya. I attended the session. My connection with the Sammelan thus dates back to the time of its inception.

The third session of the Sammelan was held in December 1912 in Calcutta, under the presidentship of Badrinarayan Choudhary 'Premghan'. I was elected general secretary of the Reception Committee. It was hardly a year since I had started my practice and I was not very well known nor did I know many people; still people wanted me and I accepted the office. During the preparations for the session I came to know the leading lights of the Sammelan. I also became very familiar with the people of Bara Bazar of Calcutta. This was the first occasion for me to shoulder the burden of organising an all-India conference. I worked hard and all went well.

The Congress session was held in Patna in the same month. As a Bihari I thought it my duty to attend it. Though the Sammelan's dates did not clash with those of the Congress session, on account of the responsibilities devolving on me as secretary of the Reception Committee I was unable to go to Patna.

In 1914 Bengal and Bihar were visited by one of the most devastating floods in memory. The first flood affected Burdwan district. Funds were collected in Calcutta for the relief of the afflicted, and many volunteers went to the scene of disaster to do relief work. Soon after, the Poonpoon river was in spate and its waters inundated the town of Patna. It was decided to rush relief to the sufferers, funds were collected in Calcutta and I went to Patna with some volunteers. With the help of the Students' Conference whose office was located at Patna, a volunteer force was organised. Food and clothes were supplied to the marooned people who were in a pitiable plight. Water had entered the houses in many villages and the food-grains stored had begun to rot and emit a terribly foul smell. In the morning we would set out in boats and distribute food and clothes to the stricken. In the evening we would go to the nearest railway station and sleep on the platform. This work continued for days and many a night I slept on the

station platform. One day I woke up to find someone gently massaging my body with a view to relieving my fatigue. Opening my eyes I saw that it was my friend Shambhu Saran. Though he had himself worked for the whole day and must have been tired, he had so kindly thought of giving me comfort.

This was the beginning, though on a modest scale, of the Bihar Seva Samiti. When we returned to Patna, this volunteer organisation was put on a permanent footing. The immediate object was to help the pilgrims attending the Sonepur fair. My brother was particularly interested in the Samiti. Every year he used to attend the fair as a volunteer. For many years till his death, he was the Samiti's president.

When we Bihari lawyers migrated to Patna, we started, with the help of a few friends, a poor boys' fund to help deserving students. Initially started under the auspices of the Bihari Students' Conference, I later took the administration of the fund in my own hands.

In March 1916, the Patna High Court started functioning. All the Bihari lawyers and many Bengali lawyers who used to handle Bihar cases migrated to Patna. Along with them I also settled down. On account of the rush, the housing situation became difficult. However, I secured some accommodation on rent and began my practice in the town. I had not done badly in Calcutta and here I did still better. I put my heart into the work. But all this was short-lived.

Soon after my coming to Patna, a Bill was introduced in the Imperial Council in Delhi for the establishment of a university at Patna. We did not like the Bill and started an agitation against it. On an earlier occasion a committee set up to formulate proposals for a university at Patna had recommended that the university be located at Phulwari Sharif with an expenditure of about Rs. 1 crore for buildings and other requirements. I was in Calcutta then and I had opposed this proposal and when I became President of the Bihari Students' Conference, I denounced it in the strongest of terms. Our objection was that the university being far removed from the city, students would have to put up in hostels and because of the high expense, higher education for poor boys would become difficult. It would also circumscribe their freedom. The common

people lent their full support to our agitation and the proposal of the committee was practically dropped. But there were other objectionable features in the new Bill.

One of these related to the constitution of the Senate and the Syndicate. Under the proposals there could be no room for genuine representatives of the people and both of these bodies would be manned, controlled and run by Government officials. With the example of Calcutta University before us, we were steadfast in our opposition to this feature of the Bill. The Vice-Chancellors of Calcutta University were men of high stature who worked fearlessly for the spread of education. Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee was an inspiring example. But even he would not have achieved much had not the Senate and Syndicate given him solid support. In the first place, we could not have secured the services of a man of the calibre of Sir Ashutosh for the post of Vice-Chancellor and even if we got one it would have been very difficult for him to implement his policies in the teeth of opposition in a hostile Senate and Syndicate. Therefore, we demanded that there should be adequate popular representation on these bodies.

The agitation became stronger and stronger. Public meetings were held in every district and resolutions condemning the Bill passed. Baidyanath Narayan Sinha and I were the men behind the agitation: we wrote several articles in the newspapers, brought out pamphlets and addressed meetings. We apprised the Legislative Council members of other provinces of our grievances and of the strength of popular opinion in Bihar and they too supported our demand. Nationalist papers all over the country backed our case. We convened a special session of the Bihar Provincial Conference under the presidentship of Purnendu Narayan Sinha who made a fighting and very critical speech calling for the deletion of the objectionable features of the Bill. The Conference passed a unanimous resolution voicing its emphatic opposition to it.

Eventually, at the Lucknow Congress Session in December 1916, we Biharis assembled in great strength. Although the Bill was of provincial importance and the Congress as a rule discussed matters of national interest only, I approached Surendranath Banerjee, Paranjpye and other leaders and succeeded in sponsoring a resolution on the Bill in the open

session. Moved by Paranjpye, the resolution was unanimously passed.

When the Imperial Legislative Council took up the Bill, the overwhelming opposition in the country had its effect. Sir Sankaran Nair, who had sponsored the Bill, consulted the members from Bihar and made some amendments, modifying the provisions which were specific targets of attack. Mazharul Haq, Bihar's representative in the Council was in constant touch with us. Ultimately the Bill as modified to our satisfaction was passed by the Council. When the University came into being, the Governor nominated me as a member of its Senate.

This was the first occasion when I worked openly against the Government and organised a mass agitation successfully. From then on, I began taking active part in the Congress activities. Although I had been a member of the A.-I.C.C. since 1911, while I was in Calcutta I had hardly rendered any service worthy of mention. But when I came to Patna, much was expected of me by the people of Bihar and I thought I should not fail them. Shortly afterwards I was made Assistant Secretary of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee and remained in that office for several years. When the Civil Disobedience Movement started and many older Congressmen left the organisation, I became secretary of the provincial body.

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First Meeting with Gandhiji

THE Lucknow Congress session of 1916 was largely attended and its importance lay in the fact that it marked the reunion of two opposing groups and the entry into the Congress ranks of a figure who was soon to loom large on the political horizon of India — the arrival of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Since the 1907 session, the Congress had been split into two camps and the leftists had left the organisation, bringing down its popularity considerably. Attendance at annual sessions had thinned and the Patna session of 1912 was probably the most thinly attended session on record. But opinion was growing among the well-wishers of the country that a rapprochement should be brought about between the two rival groups so that the Congress could be made into a force to reckon with, and at last in the 1916 session their efforts bore fruit. The session was attended by leaders of both the groups — Lokamanya Tilak and his leftist adherents as well as the Moderates. Annie Beasant too was present. Mahatma Gandhi, the hero of the successful satyagraha movement in South Africa, who had returned to India in 1915 and who had been touring the country, was also present at the session for the first time. But he did not take an active part in the proceedings. It appeared as if he was taking stock of the situation.

The Bihar contingent was a strong one. Among the delegates were besides many others Braj Kishore Prasad, Raj Kumar Shukla, a cultivator from Champaran, and myself. Raj Kumar was a victim of the depredations of the white indigo planters and had come to represent the case of the afflicted people of Champaran. I knew him as he had come to me whenever a dispute between a planter and his tenant came up to the High Court and I used to represent the tenants without remuneration.

Braj Kishore Prasad, who was fully acquainted with the situation in Champaran knew these men much better and had gone all out to help them. As president of the Bihar Provincial Conference, he had condemned the activities of the indigo

planters. As a member of the Legislative Council, he had often attempted to raise the issue on the floor of the House. Through all constitutional means he had endeavoured to focus the attention of the public on the Champaran sufferers and in cases against planters he had always helped the tenants.

The Bihar delegates had come to the Lucknow session with two aims: they wanted the Congress to adopt two resolutions, one on the Patna University Bill and another on the question of the indigo planters of Champaran. Braj Kishore Prasad, Raj Kumar and others from Bihar knew of Mahatma Gandhi's reputation and achievements in South Africa; they, therefore, wanted to enlist his support. Some of them met him, narrated to him the tale of woe of the Champaran cultivators. He was all attention to what they had to say but when they asked him to sponsor a resolution on the question, he refused, saying that he must first visit the area to study the situation for himself before he could do any such thing. It was agreed that he would go to Champaran on a fact-finding visit. Braj Kishore Prasad, however, moved a resolution in the open session and Raj Kumar, a typical peasant knowing just a little Hindi, also addressed the session. This was perhaps the first time that a village kisan spoke from the Congress platform on a resolution. When the Bihar delegates led by Braj Kishore Prasad went to Gandhiji, I was not with them. I came to know of it later. I did not know much about Gandhiji and had only a vague idea that he had done something big and noble in South Africa. I had no notion that he was one of the big leaders of the country but Raj Kumar Shukla had an instinctive faith in him and it was mainly he who persuaded Gandhiji to visit Champaran. The resolution was accepted with one voice.

Some time later, Gandhiji came to Calcutta and wrote a letter asking Raj Kumar Shukla to meet him; from there they could go together to Champaran. There was delay in transmission of the letter and before Raj Kumar could get it Gandhiji had left Calcutta. However, Raj Kumar wrote back to Gandhiji who informed him of his forthcoming visit to Calcutta for the A.-I.C.C. session and asked him to meet him there.

I was unaware of all this when I attended the A.-I.C.C. meeting at Calcutta. In fact, I was sitting next to Gandhiji

but never made any effort to speak to him. I am by nature shy and bashful. I remember that the Committee, particularly the President, pressed him to accept the secretaryship of the Congress but he flatly refused. I felt that when so many people made a joint request it was not proper for him to reject it, but I kept silent.

When the session concluded, Gandhiji met Raj Kumar Shukla who waited outside and both of them left for Patna the same night. I was delayed at the meeting and so could not meet Raj Kumar. I was therefore in complete ignorance of his plans and knew nothing of Gandhiji's tour of Bihar until much later. Gandhiji also did not know then that I belonged to Bihar and that Raj Kumar Shukla was taking him to my house in Patna. The session had met during the Easter holidays and the vacation not being over, I went to Jagannath Puri.

Raj Kumar took Gandhiji to my house in Patna. Only my servant was there and thinking that Gandhiji was a village client he put him up in an out-house and showed him no respect at all. Meanwhile, Mazharul Haq heard of his visit and hastened to my house to take Gandhiji to his own residence. In the evening Gandhiji left for Muzaffarpur where he stayed with Acharya Kripalani. There he planned his tour of Champaran. He sent a telegram to Braj Kishore Prasad at Darbhanga, where the latter was practising, to accompany him on the tour. As Gandhiji did not follow the Champaran dialect, he wanted to have an interpreter with him. Gandhiji had thought that he could collect all the data he wanted within a couple of days and Raj Kumar had thought likewise. But, Braj Kishore Prasad could not comply as he had to go on urgent business to Calcutta. So he arranged for two lawyers to accompany Gandhiji. He thought that he would go to Champaran directly from Calcutta and if necessary would take me with him.

So, accompanied by the two lawyers, Dharanidhar and Ramnaumi, Gandhiji left for Motihari, the headquarters of Champaran district. He had decided to set out for the interior when a respectable villager whose house had been looted at the instigation of a planter a few days earlier came to him. The villager said that the house still bore the marks of the pillage for anyone to see. Gandhiji, therefore, decided to go

to that village first. When he was on his way, the Collector, who seemed to have got information of his plan, served an order of externment on Gandhiji. He refused to leave the district and was prepared to face consequences. He learnt the same day that prosecution was to be launched against him. I had just returned to Patna and I got a long telegram from Gandhiji informing me of the turn of events and asking me to come to Motihari. This was the first contact between Gandhiji and me.

I, in turn, sent a telegram to Braj Kishore Prasad who immediately rushed to Patna. Accompanied by him, Anugraha Narayan Sinha and Shambu Saran, I left the next morning and reached Motihari in the afternoon. Mazharul Haq and H. S. Polak, who was then in India, had also arrived there.

We went to Gorakh Prasad's residence where Gandhiji was staying. When we were introduced, Gandhiji, who had a simple kurta (shirt) on, smiled and said: " So, you have come. You know I had been to your house." I had already heard a little of it and was embarrassed on account of my servant's behaviour. But not appearing to take notice of that, Gandhiji told us in brief what had happened in the court, for by then the case had come up and, after hearing, had only that day been adjourned for a few days for judgment.

For further details Gandhiji directed us to Dharanidhar and Ramnaumi, his interpreters, and he began to converse with Polak. The two lawyers told us that the previous night Gandhiji had asked them what would be their next step if he were to be sent to jail. Perhaps not realising what he was driving at, Dharanidhar, the elder of the two, light-heartedly replied that not having any more interpreting to do, they would go home. Gandhiji queried: " What happens to this investigation? Will it be abandoned? " It set them athinking and then Dharanidhar said he would continue the investigation but if any restraint order was served on him he would return home and send another batch of lawyers to take up the work, as he was not prepared to go to jail. If they too were to be restrained by the Collector, they would leave and send a third team to continue the inquiry. The work would thus not suffer. Gandhiji seemed somewhat, though not fully, satisfied

but he did not say anything and proceeded to draft letters to the Viceroy and the leaders and his statement to the court. This occupied the best part of the night.

While Gandhiji was thus engaged, the two lawyers were restless, turning the matter over in their minds the whole night. They thought it odd that while an utter stranger was prepared to face unknown dangers and to court imprisonment to help the poor cultivators of Champaran whom he had never seen before, the residents of the area who professed to be interested in the welfare of the sufferers remained passive. They were thinking of going home and letting this hero from South Africa bear the whole burden! At the same time, they thought of their homes and families. What would happen to them if they went to jail? But surely, the stranger too had a family and was he thinking of it? None of us had ever thought of courting imprisonment. Jail was a horrible place from which people bought temporary immunity at great cost. Tormented thus by reluctance to go to jail and by the misgiving that they were abandoning an unknown man who had suddenly appeared as if from nowhere to help the Champaran people, they lay awake in bed the whole night, unable to decide on their next move.

In the morning, while Gandhiji was preparing to go to court, the two lawyers, unable to contain themselves any longer, burst into tears and told him that if he were to be sent to jail, they would also follow him if the need arose. Overjoyed, Gandhiji said, " Now victory is ours. "

When we heard this moving declaration by the lawyers, we thought we should follow their example. I was not particularly impressed by Gandhiji at my first meeting. Though I knew something about the Champaran affair it was mainly in compliance with Braj Kishore Prasad's wishes that I had gone there thinking that whatever work was to be done, would be done. I did not have the foggiest notion that on reaching there we would face the possibility of imprisonment. The more we thought about it, the firmer grew our determination to court imprisonment. We announced our decision to Gandhiji. He beamed with joy and took a piece of paper and began noting down the names of all volunteers. He divided us into groups, each under a leader, to continue the investigation, and go to

jail if necessary, in the order determined by him. The first group was to be led by Mazharul Haq, the second by Braj Kishore Prasad and the third by me. Thus within a few hours of our arrival at Motihari, a change seemed to have come over our lives and we were ready to face imprisonment.

As the judgment in Gandhiji's case was to be announced in three or four days, we decided that one by one we should go to our respective places, finish any pending business and return, ready for what may come. Mazharul Haq and Braj Kishore Prasad left first and after their return I was to go. Meanwhile, our investigations were resumed.

I have written at great length on the Champaran affair in my book, *Champaran Men Mahatma Gandhi*, in Hindi, which I wrote shortly after the successful conclusion of the agitation. I shall only give a summary in the next chapter. In his autobiography Gandhiji has said that our response pleased him. He developed an affection for Bihar from that day and we became his trusted men.

As I have said, my very first meeting with Gandhiji did not particularly impress me. But as the days passed I not only developed a great affection for him but also tremendous confidence in the method of his work. By the time the agitation ended, we all had become his ardent devotees and zealous advocates of his method.

21

Champaran

MANY Englishmen had settled in Champaran and had been engaged in the cultivation of indigo for more than a hundred years. Wherever indigo could be grown in the district, they had set up their factories. A large part of the cultivable land belonged to them and they did their own cultivation.

The Bettiah Estate constituted a large part of the district. The white planters had become agents of the Raj for the realisation of land revenue from most of the villages of the Estate and such villages had gradually come under their control. When the Raj, badly in need of money, raised a loan in England with the help of the white planters, it mortgaged most of its villages with them. In many villages they acquired what was called the *mokarri* right. This permitted them to raise from the villages whatever money they liked while they themselves paid only a fixed revenue to the Estate. They thus came into virtual possession of the villages and became proprietors for all practical purposes subject to the payment of the amount fixed permanently and not liable to be enhanced. It meant that if income from the villages increased it all went to the planter, the Raj getting only the permanently fixed amount. In those villages where they did not have this *mokarri* right, they could enjoy the income therefrom after paying the fixed rent to the Estate only for a term of years. When once the term was over any increase or addition to the income would accrue to the Estate and it was open to the Estate to give or not give a fresh lease. Also if it decided to give a fresh lease to the planter it could fix new terms regulating the amount of annual payment to the Estate and the period of the lease. The Estate, however, seldom increased the amount payable by the planters or refused to renew the lease but the legal right was there.

The planters began forcing the cultivators of the villages to grow indigo for them. They claimed the right to force any cultivator to grow indigo on one-fourth or three-twentieth of his holdings. The system was known as *panch kathia* or *teen*

kathia. The helpless kisan had to divert the best part of his holdings to indigo. Cultivators audacious enough to defy the planters were harassed and subjected to all kinds of atrocities. Their houses were looted, crops destroyed and stray cattle let loose on their lands. They were dragged into false cases and made to pay fines. The more intractable were even beaten up. Thus even the most obtuse of the kisans were brought under the heel of the ruthless planters and *teen kathia* became the prevalent system.

Indigo cultivation had to be done before cultivation of the field for any other crop and the best plots had to be set apart for indigo. The cultivators had to harvest the indigo crop and carry it to the factories. For all this the cultivator received a pittance in the name of payment which fell far short even of actual expenses. No demur in any of these obligations was tolerated, and the Government officials were always there to bring round to his senses any unwilling kisan. If any officer took it into his head to be fair to the cultivators, the planters saw to it that he was transferred elsewhere or coerced into behaving as they desired. Some conscientious officers did submit to government reports about the atrocities of the planters and the *teen kathia* system but nothing happened. Sometimes, in sheer despair, the cultivators rose in revolt and killed a planter or two. But they were no match for the organised strength of the planters, with the might of the State behind them, and the revolts were always crushed. Whole villages were looted and the police and court officials let loose repression. Every little revolt thus only brought home to the poor cultivators their utter helplessness and made them completely servile.

In order to acquire legal sanctions for their activities, the planters, with the influence they commanded with the Government, managed to get the Tenancy Act amended in their favour. By these amendments they were able to compel the cultivators legally to divert a portion of their land to indigo. Exemption from this condition could be secured only by agreeing to pay increased land revenue in excess of what was ordinarily allowed by the law. Ordinarily, the landlords did not have the right to enhance the rent by more than 12½ per cent nor to increase it for a long period of time once it had

been raised. The planters, by the amendment of the Act, were freed from these limitations.

Then the Maharaja of Bettiah died. The widowed Maharani was declared insane and the Estate was taken over by the Court of Wards. One of the planters was appointed manager of the Estate. Thus for twenty years the planters held full sway over the Bettiah villages. But when Gandhiji came to Champaran, a member of the Indian Civil Service was in charge of the management of the Estate and afterwards the management never passed into the hands of a planter.

Meanwhile, Germany discovered a process of manufacturing synthetic dyes which were considerably cheaper than dyes obtained from indigo. The price of indigo steeply declined, and the planters' profits dwindled. So to maintain their income, they applied the squeeze on the poor cultivators. For this they resorted to the clause in the Tenancy Act which permitted release of the cultivators from the obligation to cultivate indigo if they agreed to pay increased revenue. But the kisans had got wind of the fact that indigo was no more profitable to the planters and they would have to give up its cultivation in any case. They were, therefore, not anxious to bargain for a release from their obligations. The planters, however, could not be stopped from having their way. They began forcibly to release the land and on their own terms. In the *mokarri* villages, the kisans were made to sign agreements under duress agreeing to increased rent. In non-*mokarri* villages, where the increased rent accrued to the Bettiah Estate, the planters realised large amounts in cash. When a tenant was unable to pay cash, the planters got a promissory note executed by him. By these methods, the planters collected nearly Rs. 25 lakhs.

In the areas in which the land was not at all suitable for indigo, the planters resorted to other means to extort money from the tillers. They realised all kinds of obsolete taxes or taxes forbidden by law. They nominally settled some land to the tiller and freed him from the obligation to cultivate indigo by increasing the rent, as if he had been growing indigo and he wanted to be released from the obligation. In some cases the new land supposed to be so settled did not exist and the agreement mentioned imaginary boundaries. Under the law the maximum limit for enhancement of rent was annas two

in a rupee but any rent could be levied for a newly settled piece of land. The planters hoped that eventually the increases in rents from the old land and from the newly settled additional land which in some cases had only nominal existence and in some did not exist altogether, would be merged together. Thus whether cultivators belonged to a *mokarri* village or a non-*mokarri* village, whether they grew indigo or did not, all had to pay enhanced rents or cash. All this was done with the Government's full connivance and even active co-operation. The Government appointed special officers to register the enhancement agreements as under law such increments required registration.

At this juncture war broke out in Europe and the import of foreign dyes stopped. The prospects for indigo brightened again. Regardless of the release from indigo-growing obligation, the planters began forcing the tenants to take to indigo cultivation again, and to a large extent, they were successful. At this time, the Government ordered a revision of the survey and settlement of lands in Champaran district. At the survey and settlement proceedings, tillers complained that they had been made to sign the rent increase agreements under duress but their pleas were rejected by the Settlement Officer. The kisans were terribly agitated. Ordinarily they could not have a hearing from the Government but now, with the planters helping the war effort, the chances of Government doing justice were still more remote. The peasantry was desperate and the survey and settlement revision was about to be completed when Mahatma Gandhi arrived on the scene.

When Raj Kumar Shukla had narrated the Champaran atrocities to Gandhiji, he found it difficult to believe them and that was why he wanted to see things for himself. When he arrived in Champaran, the kisans were already astir and an awakening had dawned. Before, they were even afraid of going to court for redressal of their grievances because, if they did, the planters' men would even physically drag them out of the court room and beat them up. But now when they heard of Gandhiji's arrival, many of them came to see him at Muzaffarpur and told their tale of woe and suffering.

But, the Secretary of the Planters' Association and the Commissioner of Tirhut Division advised Gandhiji against

proceeding to Champaran. They said that Government itself was seized of the situation and had set afoot the survey and settlement proceedings, the report of which was awaited. In view of that and in view of the war, they said, it would not be proper for Gandhiji to start an agitation in the countryside. Some Indians too, thought likewise and advised Gandhiji to abandon his idea in view of the delicate situation created by the war and the danger of riots and unrest. But this made him the more determined in his mission.

Miraculously enough, the peasants shed their fear the moment Gandhiji arrived in their midst. His visit somehow convinced these unsophisticated people that at last their saviour had come and their troubles would end soon. When Gandhiji was arrested for defying the externment order and the case came up in the Motihari court, the villagers gathered in their thousands. So great was the rush that the gates of the court room gave way. Gandhiji made a statement (in the court) and judgment was reserved. A few days later he was acquitted and declared free to move about and carry on his investigations. In the eyes of the villagers, Gandhiji had become a hero and they flocked to him in thousands to make their statements. We began recording the statements. Gandhiji asked us lawyers to be circumspect and use our skill in cross-examining in recording statements, so that whatever was recorded was true. So our monumental work proceeded apace.

At this time C. F. Andrews came to Motihari to see the Mahatma. I still remember his arrival in an *ekka* (a kind of horse carriage) and being new to riding in that uncomfortable vehicle, he got his shoes damaged through friction with the wheel. A European in an unconventional dress, riding in an *ekka* and mixing freely with the Indians was a rare sight to us. We had heard that Andrews was an influential man who often went round the world (to serve the people) and had access even to the Viceroy. His simplicity and sincerity touched me at the very first meeting and I never ceased to admire him. Our relations grew more and more intimate and lasted till his death.

He had been invited to go to Fiji and he was to leave after meeting Gandhiji. We were awaiting the judgment in Gandhiji's case and we felt that if he were to be sentenced to

imprisonment, the presence of an experienced man like Andrews would be a great help. So we asked Andrews if he would stay with us for a while and postpone his trip to Fiji. He was agreeable but we had to secure Gandhiji's consent. We spoke to him and pressed him hard for his consent.

But Gandhiji diagnosed our trouble at once. He said: " The more you press on the Rev. Andrews to stay, the more I am confirmed in my view that he should leave on his mission to Fiji at once. You are afraid of the Government and the European planters. You imagine that if you have an Englishman in your midst, he will be a great support to you. That is the reason why you want him to stay. I want you to get rid of your fear of the Englishman and of your feeling that he is any different from you. You must have faith in yourself. Yes, the Rev. Andrews must leave tomorrow. "

He then told Andrews about the importance of his work in Fiji and that he should not put off his departure. Andrews agreed. We all realised how correct Gandhiji was and how correctly he had sensed our thoughts.

The next day, before leaving, Andrews met the District Magistrate who told him of the Government's decision to drop the case against Gandhiji and that orders to that effect would be issued in a day or two. Andrews immediately came and told us the good news. We were all overjoyed and thought that Gandhiji had scored the first victory in the Champaran struggle.

Now began in right earnest the investigation of the Champaran atrocities. We were divided in batches and recorded the statements of the kisans who came in a regular procession. We would sometimes move to Bettiah. Eventually one batch stayed at Bettiah: another at Motihari. We worked without respite. To anything startling in the statements we would at once draw Gandhiji's attention, otherwise we just passed on the recorded statements to him for his perusal. The work continued for many days, and about 22,000 to 25,000 statements were recorded. Our activities became the talk of the district.

Sometimes Gandhiji would visit a village or send one of us to inquire into a complaint. We had strict instructions not to address the people. There were, therefore, no meetings and no

lectures either by us or by Gandhiji in Champaran in those days. When Home Rule agitation swept the country, Gandhiji told us that while we were the spearhead of the Home Rule movement, we need not, during the Champaran investigations, take part in the movement.

As our inquiry was getting under way, the officers in the district became nervous. They thought that not only the planters but they too were losing their hold over the people and were afraid that the British rule in Champaran would come to an end. People began looking upon Gandhiji as the highest tribunal in the land to whom even a complaint against the District Magistrate could be taken. Uncertain of the future, the officers sent a report to the provincial Government. A call came to Gandhiji to meet one of its Members. So he went to Patna and handed over to the Government representative an interim report on his investigations. The Member placed the report before the Executive Council for consideration.

Meanwhile, our work of recording statements continued. The planters also came and took Gandhiji to their places to explain their viewpoints and to enable him to see things for himself. We began to realise that public service was not merely holding conferences, making speeches and passing resolutions. By just recording the statements of the villagers and thus coming into close contact with them we acquired an intimate knowledge of their problems and hopes. While this work enabled the villagers to shed their fear complex, we too became fearless. Gandhiji's methods were thus novel to us. We came to know of happenings which we would never have considered possible. We felt we were doing real service, the consequences of which were certain to be far-reaching.

We were shadowed by the police who noted the names and addresses of those who came to us. Even the employees of the planters mixed in the crowds and carried reports to their employers. Once when one of our colleagues was recording the statements of a batch of villagers, a Sub-Inspector of Police came and took a seat near him. Our colleague shifted to another place and the Sub-Inspector followed him. Enraged, our friend asked the officer to see and hear whatever he liked from a distance. The Sub-Inspector complained to Gandhiji, saying: " We have orders to keep an eye on what is going on.

We do not disturb your men in their work but they do not allow us to go near them. We too have our duty to perform. "

Gandhiji at once called for our friend and asked him if he was working alone or was with other people. The latter replied that he had with him many kisans who were narrating their complaints. Gandhiji asked, " Are you doing anything in secret? " The other replied in the negative. Gandhiji wondered why he was trying to conceal anything from the Sub-Inspector. Our colleague replied that he was not trying to conceal anything but that his nearness disturbed him. Then Gandhiji made a characteristic remark: " If you were not disturbed by so many cultivators crowding around you, why should you be disturbed by the presence of another individual? Why don't you look upon him also as one of the ryots? "

This embarrassed the Sub-Inspector who had gone to Gandhiji to show himself off but Gandhiji had reduced him to the level of the ryots! He said nothing and marched out. After this we never minded if a policeman came and sat near us.

Once a planter came to Gandhiji and boasted that conditions in his estate were ideal and that the cultivators were happy. If Gandhiji wanted he could go with the planter and see things for himself. Gandhiji consented and took me along with him. When we were walking through the countryside to the village where we were invited some of the ryots met us and said that the *saheb* (the planter) had tutored many kisans to praise him before us. Gandhiji suggested to them that if the people had any grievance, they should not be afraid of coming before the planter and ventilating it. We had already looked into the statements made by the people of the area and Gandhiji was, therefore, fully aware of the real conditions.

At the planter's place, everything appeared to be set for the farce to follow. A few hundred men had collected. Even the Sub-Divisional Magistrate was present by invitation. Two or three cultivators came forward and said their piece. They had no grievance and were quite happy. Suddenly from the assembled crowd voices rang out simultaneously exclaiming, " They are telling lies; they are only repeating what they have been told to say. " Gandhiji asked them to remain silent and said their turn would come. So after the planters' men had finished their performance, Gandhiji called for the interrupters and

asked them what they had to say. They came forward boldly and repeated the very statements they had made to us before. One man went further, complained against the Magistrate and said that the planters and the Magistrates were one and the cultivators could expect no justice from them. Turning to the Magistrate and referring to a particular incident, he put him a question. For answer, the Magistrate immediately got up and walked out. That was the end of the meeting.

His drama having misfired, the planter came out with another brilliant idea! On the following day, he got a small bungalow of his set on fire with the intention of implicating all the ryots on the charge of incendiarism. But that plan also misfired.

The fire was started at night while the planter waited in a nearby village for word to come when he would loot and sack the villages with the help of the police. But the man who was to have brought him the news turned up only the next day. Meanwhile we came to know of this and reported the matter to the Government. The Magistrate too made a report saying that there was utter anarchy and it appeared as if the British Government had ended! Such incidents were not rare.

After these reports, the Government machinery began to move. The Governor of Bihar sent for Gandhiji. The letter from Ranchi said that owing to the presence of Gandhiji anarchy and lawlessness were spreading fast. The Government, therefore, wanted to remove him from Champaran but before any orders were issued, the Governor would like to meet him. We felt that Gandhiji might be imprisoned or externed from Bihar and that we might not be later permitted to carry on the work. Gandhiji, therefore, began to make future plans. He divided us into two batches, one to work from Bettiah and the other from Motihari. He gave us full directions about our future course of action in the event of his arrest. We prepared duplicates of the thousands of documents we had and arranged for their safe custody. His plans finalised, Gandhiji left for Ranchi. We impatiently awaited the result of his interview. I was in charge of the Bettiah office. At last I got a telegram saying that the talks were continuing. Eventually we heard the good news; the Governor had set up a Commission to

look into the ryots' grievances and Gandhiji had been asked to serve on it.

The Commission made a tour of the district, recorded evidence of Government officials, planters and ryots and studied petitions from interested parties. As desired by Gandhiji, we submitted a memorandum to the Commission on the basis of the recorded evidence in our possession. While besides Government officials the planters and the landlords had their representatives on the Commission, the ryots were represented only by Gandhiji. At the time of the preparation of the report Gandhiji and the Chairman, Sir Frank Sly, desired that the report should be unanimous. Even at the outset, the Governor had said that unanimity would ensure quick action. After protracted negotiations, the Commission presented a unanimous report to the Government.

According to the Commission's recommendations, the planters were to collect only three-fourths of the increased land revenue and they were to return one-fourth of the cash they had extorted from the cultivators. The Government accepted the recommendations and enacted a law declaring the custom of *teen kathia* illegal. Land revenue was reduced as suggested. The Bettiah Estate refunded to the cultivators 25 per cent of their cash payments to the planters after realising the amount from them. We had often discussed among ourselves that as both enhancement of rent and the cash payment were illegal, the rent must be reduced to the pre-enhancement rate and entire cash realised returned. But there were lots of legal hurdles. Many of the planters had sold off their properties after receiving the cash and the new owners of the property could not naturally be asked to pay up amounts they had never received. Similar difficulties made cancellations of enhancements difficult. Under the prevailing law a civil suit had to be filed to prove that the cultivator had agreed to pay the enhanced rent under duress. As a matter of fact, before Gandhiji arrived in Champaran, eleven such suits had been filed by the cultivators of a village against the planters. They engaged a renowned barrister and the cases had been long-drawn-out affairs. Eventually five of the suits were decreed in favour of the ryots, six in favour of the planters. There were some reversals in appeal. The issue was simple: if everybody

wanted to redress his grievance through the court, thousands of cases would have to be filed and they would involve considerable time and expense. In view of all this, Gandhiji thought compromise was advisable and accordingly agreed to sign the report.

What the Commission offered to the ryots was far less than their demands. But the main achievement of the year-long agitation lay in this: the planters lost their foothold in Champaran. They had been rendered too weak to be tyrannical or even aggressive. Profits were impossible for them except through coercion; and with the changed temper of the ryots, force was a useless weapon. The ryots had become courageous and conscious of their power. The planters were not tardy in realising this and in three or four years they disposed of their lands and houses and left Champaran with whatever they could get. Their lands came into the hands of the tillers. On the plots where the planters' bungalows stood and beautiful gardens were laid now stand the cattle sheds of the ryots. Only a few of the seventy or seventy-five bungalows can be seen today. They remind one of serpents whose fangs have been broken.

We saw in Champaran on a smaller scale Gandhiji's *satyagraha* which he later organised through the length and breadth of the country. This agitation which had a very limited objective and covered a small area took one year and even then success was qualified. I feel when writing this (1943) that we have not been able to put in the proportionate effort and time for freeing this country. But valuable lessons were learnt. We all worked as one team, in perfect unison, carrying out the behests of the leader. He taught us a new lesson in public affairs. Though he wanted to put an end to the atrocities of the planters, he bore no ill-will against them and no bitterness against the adversary. Nor did we harbour any resentment or malice. The Champaran struggle was a fine rehearsal in the technique of Satyagraha. The results achieved were quick and satisfactory because it was Saytagraha truly conducted. It is my faith that the objective of Swaraj will be realised similarly. We may have to give in much by way of compromise but we will win all through in the end. Things are shaping that way, though there are good and valid reasons for the delay in the

achievement of independence. Hundreds of millions are involved and the problem is vast. The unswerving faith which moved the simple peasants of Champaran is simply not there and the number of loyal and devoted workers is inadequate for the task. Nor has the country observed non-violence to the same extent, yet what has been achieved within the last 20 or 25 years is by no means negligible. People will realise and appreciate Gandhiji's magic when we shall have achieved the objective of Swaraj. We ourselves were not satisfied with Gandhiji's compromise with the Government and the planters but when within 3 or 4 years the planters disappeared we realised the value of the work done by Gandhiji, yet he himself maintained good relations with the planters who often invited him to their houses. Some of them were not well disposed towards him, but generally, it must be said that they were not bitter. In fact, after the Commission's work was concluded, Gandhiji wanted to start some schools for the ryots and he sought their help. Three schools were opened in different parts of the district.

As a result of our stay with Gandhiji, a revolutionary change came in our day-to-day life. I was, for example, a strict observer of caste rules and restrictions. I would never eat any food touched by a non-Brahmin which was not ordinarily eaten by my caste people. Gandhiji told us if this sort of culinary separatism continued we would not be able to carry on public work. People having the same objective belonged to one caste, he said. There was no answer to that sentiment and I changed my ways, as did the others. We belonged to different castes but we began to eat in a common mess. Our living too became simpler. One by one we dispensed with the services of our servants retaining only one. We washed our own clothes, carried water from the well, washed our utensils and helped the cook. Any short journey to a nearby village we did on foot. We travelled by third class in trains. We gave up ease and comfort without a demur.

We were able to meet and know many public workers from different parts of the country and this contact was a valuable experience for us. Some of them are still dedicated to the service of the country.

Our victory in Champaran had a great effect on the whole

province of Bihar. It was a backward province socially and educationally and had no public life. Its long association with Bengal had robbed it of its separate identity. Bengal was well advanced in English education while in Bihar, schools and colleges were few and the progress of education very slow. No wonder a Bihari hardly found any place in Government offices, not to speak of high posts. It was this deplorable state of the province that had led to the agitation for the separation of Bihar from Bengal. In the forefront of the agitation were the late Mahesh Narayan and Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha. At last the British Government conceded the demand and in 1911 at the Coronation Durbar in Delhi, King George V announced the decision. Partitioned Bengal was once again united into one province. Bihar and Orissa constituted another. The agitation itself had brought an awakening in the province. The Students' Conference came into existence and the Provincial Political Conference woke up to greater activity. The number of students steadily increased in schools and colleges and more and more sought higher education in Calcutta. There was all-round progress in Bihar after it became a separate province. Nevertheless, till 1917 there was no public organisation worth the name doing regular work.

Owing to the efforts of Dr. Sinha, the Congress had set up a Bihar Provincial Committee recognising the province's separate identity, but its funds were low and activities limited. Subscriptions collected from the delegates to the annual session of the Congress and the members of the A.-I.C.C. constituted the only sources of income and all expenses of the Provincial Congress Committee including the annual subscription payable to the A.-I.C.C. were met out of this. When the Congress Secretary Subha Rao visited Patna for collection, some money was realised from prominent citizens and paid to him. Nawab Sarfaraz Hussain Khan and myself, the Secretaries of the Provincial Congress, met the office expenditure. It was a small amount being mainly the charges on postage and stationery. There was not a single man who could be said to be a whole-time public worker. Members of the Congress or those doing public service in some other capacity continued to be engaged in their professions, while giving some time to public work also. This was largely the position in other provinces,

although they had a few whole-timers devoted entirely to public work. Most of us who joined Gandhiji in Champaran were lawyers and not one had joined him with the idea of giving up the profession. But when we started working in Champaran, our whole outlook changed. We found it impossible, once we had undertaken it, to go back to our avocations without completing the task on hand. Thus people who went there for a few days remained for months. When we had finished the work in Champaran, we returned home with new ideas, a new courage and a new programme.

A wave of enthusiasm swept the province. There were signs of awakening everywhere. We could feel and realise that if the public life of Bihar was to be at all effective, some of us would have to devote ourselves to it to the exclusion of everything else.

22

Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms

THE first world war aroused much sympathy in India for the Allied cause. Indian men and money contributed substantially to the prosecution of the war and British statesmen recognised the country's support in their hour of need. The Allied propaganda of war for democracy and self-determination stirred Indians and they demanded a promise that after victory they too would be granted the right to shape their own destiny. The promise was not forthcoming. So an agitation for home rule was started in 1917, at the time of the Champaran struggle, by Annie Besant and Lokamanya Tilak. The Home Rule League was founded with branches throughout India and the country was swept by a wave of an unprecedented awakening. The Government was frightened and it interned Annie Besant and two of her colleagues. The Government had calculated wrongly: the movement gained strength.

The British Government realised that they would have to do something to stem the upsurge. Something effective, something that would satisfy the people and prevent the tide of awakening from turning into an engulfing flood, had to be done and that quickly. E. S. Montagu, the newly-appointed Secretary of State for India, made an announcement in the British Parliament promising reforms. The blessings of self-government were to be conferred on India through gradual democratic processes. Montagu said that Parliament would be the final arbiter about the timing and the measure of self-government to be introduced. Montagu then visited India and along with the then Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, met the Indian leaders. And Annie Besant was released.

It was on the crest of a wave of enthusiasm that Annie Besant was elected to preside over the 1917 Congress in Calcutta. A large contingent from Bihar, specially from Champaran, participated in the session. I also went. We put up with Gandhiji who was staying at a place arranged for him by Jamnalal Bajaj. It was here that I first met Jamnalalji. Gandhiji did not take any spectacular part in the proceedings of the session.

Shortly afterwards the Montagu-Chelmsford report on reforms in India was published. It was followed by a country-wide discussion. In Bihar a meeting of the Bihar Provincial Conference was held to consider the report. Not being an extremist, I found myself in agreement, in essentials, with the views of the ' moderates '. So I expressed the view that we were not in a position to put pressure on the British Government to secure whatever we wanted, and furthermore, that we had not quite come up to a level when we could carry on the administration if it were transferred to us too early. Therefore, I said that the Report was fair and should be given a trial, and added that our criticism should not give the impression that we were rejecting the proposals. There was opposition to my views but eventually the Conference decision more or less followed the line I had taken.

The Congress convened a special session at Bombay to consider the Montagu-Chelmsford Report under the presidentship of Syed Hasan Imam, a well-known Barrister of Patna. It was owing to his able handling of the meetings that a head-on clash was averted between the Extremists who were led by Lokamanya Tilak and the Moderates. The difference of opinion between the two groups was too sharp for the uneasy truce between them to continue, and some of the Moderates decided to leave the Congress and set up a new organisation of Liberals. The Bombay session, while describing the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals as "disappointing and unsatisfactory", decided to accept the Reforms, subject to certain reservations. Three months later, the Congress, in its annual session, ratified the Bombay decision.

I attended the Bombay session but did not take part in its proceedings. Gandhiji had fallen seriously ill and could not attend it. On my way home, I visited him and, as far as I could read his thoughts, I was convinced that his views were fully in consonance with those of the Moderates.

While Gandhiji was in Champaran, the kisans of Kaira district in Gujerat had started an agitation against increase of land revenue there. The campaign was organised by Vallabhbhai Patel, Shankarlal Banker and Anusuya Sarabhai under instructions from Gandhiji. The kisans refused to pay land revenue until their demands were met. On the completion

of his work in Champaran, Gandhiji returned to Gujerat and after a few days' stay at Sabarmati Ashram threw himself heart and soul into the Kaira agitation. I was with Gandhiji at Sabarmati and during the Kaira tour, and had the opportunity of meeting Sardar Patel who later came very close to Gandhiji and became one of his trusted lieutenants. Gandhiji did not wear shoes in those days. Once when crossing a sandy stretch of land in the hot April sun I saw how painful it was for Gandhiji to walk. I wanted him to rest his feet for a while on my *chaddar* which I was going to spread on the ground but he did not allow me to do it. Gandhiji succeeded in making Government cancel the order of enhancement in land revenue. The nationalist forces thus had two victories to their credit in one year — Champaran and Kaira.

While in Champaran Gandhiji advised Swami Satyadev to take up the work of spreading Hindi in the South and along with him he sent his youngest son, Deva Das. Some time later, at the Indore session held under Gandhiji's presidentship, the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan decided to take up the work of propagation of Hindi in the South. I along with other Bihar delegates put up with Gandhiji at Indore and from there went with him to Sabarmati Ashram, started by Gandhiji before he left for Champaran. The Indore decision and the Hindi Prachar work done thereafter have borne ample fruit: hundreds of thousands of South Indians have felt attracted and learnt Hindi.

After the Kaira agitation, Gandhiji, who had throughout supported the Allied cause in the World War and had advocated the country's contribution in men and money to the war effort, started touring the district persuading the people to join the Army. He admitted that the Government did make mistakes, perhaps even committed a few atrocities, but he declared he had faith in Britain and was confident that she would do justice by India in the end. So he pleaded that the people should come forward and help the war effort wholeheartedly. I was so convinced of the soundness of his arguments that I too joined an official board for recruitment of men to the army in Bihar. But, despite our best efforts, recruitment did not make much headway either in Gujerat or Bihar.

Gandhiji, as was his wont, had plunged into the recruitment campaign with all earnestness. His continual tours told upon

his health and serious illness prevented him from attending the Bombay A.-I.C.C. session.

Hearing of his illness, on my way home from Bombay I went to Ahmedabad to see him. Gandhiji was staying in the palatial house of Seth Ambalal Sarabhai. His condition was grave. Doctors had attended on him but he would not take any medicine. One day while I was away sight-seeing, Gandhiji developed very high temperature and decided to shift to the Sabarmati Ashram. The Ashram had recently been established and only a few houses had been put up, but people had already started living there. At Sabarmati, he would not be assured of the comforts he had at Ahmedabad and in that state of his health, it was dangerous for him to move there. His friends tried their best to detain him, but Gandhiji was determined and he left for Sabarmati. On my return I heard of this and I also left for Sabarmati the same evening.

The next morning, I was sitting near Gandhiji who was lying on a *charpoy*. His fever had come down but he was very weak. He called Chhagan Lal Gandhi and began talking to him. He appeared agitated, grew emotional and talked at a stretch for quite some time. The excitement and the effort caused a rise in his temperature. I can never forget that incident. Put briefly, he said, " At Ahmedabad fever affected my body but the luxurious living in that palatial house had started corroding my mind. I told myself: ' Gandhi! what have you to do with this place? You are a misfit here. Your place is in the cottage of the poor in the Ashram. You must quit immediately.' So I insisted on leaving for Sabarmati and I thought when I reached here I would be able to get rid of my fever. You might have disliked my obstinacy but I could not help it.

" Even after coming here I could not sleep and I lay awake in bed thinking. I asked myself if my life would be spent in vain. Since my return from South Africa I have taken several things in hand but not one of them could I complete. Everything was left half-done. I interested myself in the mill workers' strike. I achieved some success in getting their demands accepted. But the workers still suffer from many disabilities and I wanted to work in their midst and try to remove them; instead I had to leave for Champaran. There I was able to secure some relief

for the cultivators from the indigo planters but there is so much still to be done to improve their lot. I opened a few schools but that is not enough. I intended to put myself heart and soul in the work in Champaran and carry it to completion with the able and self-sacrificing band of workers I had the good fortune to gather around me. But I had to leave that work and had to come to Kaira. In Kaira the satyagraha was successful, but there was great scope for work among the people and I could not attend to that either. I joined the recruitment drive.

" And now I have fallen ill and do not know if I shall ever recover from this illness. Even if I do get well, I do not know for how long it may be. All of you, who have been working with me right since my return from South Africa, are also not able to devote yourselves fully to any work on account of my condition. Your health also is none too good. I established this Ashram with such hope and expectation but have I given it much time either? No, I inaugurated it by sending a message from Champaran. I could not be present personally and since then I have been out for one reason or another. And now I am in this condition. I do not know what God's will is. "

While talking thus he burst into tears and wept like a child. Chhagan Lal and myself, the only witnesses to this scene, were too moved to console him. After a while he calmed down and became quiet. He said that the tears had somewhat relieved the terrible strain which had deprived him of sleep. I was all the while thinking that it was my great good luck to have come in contact with such a truly great man.

23
The Rowlatt Act

GOVERNMENT officials generally had praise for India's war effort, but they were not content with the voluntary help of the people. They tried methods of extortion which left a lot of discontent in their trail. The Punjab, especially, was deeply hurt and seething with discontent. Sir Michael O'Dyer, the then Governor of the province, used unmitigated force to enlist recruits and obtain funds for the war and the people of the Punjab were naturally bitter. The British Government knew this and knew also that similar discontent existed in other provinces, but they did not seem to care so long as they got what they wanted. Some Indians living abroad, for example Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Veer Savarkar and others, thought of turning the war to India's advantage and tried to work for an armed revolt in the country. But that proved to be a still-born effort.

Meanwhile, the Muslims of India felt aggrieved that Indian soldiers, including Muslims, had been sent to fight Turkey which was an ally of Germany. The Government tried to pacify them with the promise that they would protect the religious institutions and places of worship in Turkey and not do anything which would harm Turkish unity or the Turkish nation.

Notwithstanding the promises made to the Muslims and to the people of India in general, the British policy continued unchanged. The Defence of India Act, a war-time measure, could remain in force only till six months after the termination of the war. If the security regulations had, therefore, to be annulled, Government would have to release all the internees detained without proper trial. In case popular discontent assumed larger proportions the Government would have no weapon to bring it effectively and quickly under control. It was not a time, the Government thought, to observe the niceties of law in political trials. It, therefore, appointed a committee presided over by Sir Sidney Rowlatt, a Judge of the London High Court, to go into the question. The

Committee, after giving a history of the Indian revolutionary movement, recommended the enactment of a Bill to give summary powers to suppress all disturbances and revolutionary activities and to maintain 'law and order' in India. In short, the Rowlatt Report wanted the Government of India to continue to enjoy the same emergency powers given to them during the war even during peace time. We had, thus, on the one hand, the offer of reforms by the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme and, on the other, the Rowlatt Report proposing to arm the Government with extraordinary powers during peace time. The meaning of this dual and contradictory policy was not lost on the people.

Whatever the object of the Rowlatt Bill, the provisions were so drastic that the people in general felt that their freedom was in danger. To Gandhiji, this came as a rude shock. His faith in the British was shaken. The unconditional support to the British cause in the war was now to be rewarded with repression. He made an appeal to the Viceroy to drop the Bill, but the request was rejected. Then Gandhiji announced the launching of the first nation-wide satyagraha campaign. The agitation was to take the form of meetings, hartals and peaceful demonstrations. He fixed a day to start the satyagraha and asked the people to fast, pray, take out processions and hold meetings to protest against the Black Act. He issued these calls to the people through the columns of *Young India*, a weekly magazine he had started some time previously and whose articles had created a stir in the whole country.

The response to Gandhiji's call was phenomenal. His message, strangely enough, reached the four corners of the country even though the Congress organisation had not become so strong and widespread. On the appointed day, all work came to a standstill and the country observed an unprecedented hartal. In all towns, all means of communications were suspended. Even in the countryside, the peasant put away his plough.

But before the hartal Gandhiji had made one stipulation. He wanted every satyagrahi to sign a pledge of non-violence and to agree to defy such laws as might be suggested by the Satyagraha Committee and to suffer gladly any punishment such action might entail. The Committee had so far not

specified the laws to be defied. The Liberals and a section of the press criticised his move but Gandhiji stuck to his resolve. In Bihar, Hasan Imam, I and others signed the pledge. I actively organised the hartal in Patna.

Now and then I would get letters from Gandhiji but mostly we drew on *Young India*. Mazharul Haq had gone to Delhi to attend the meetings of the Council, but Hasan Imam was there and took an active part in the movement. On the first day all the shopkeepers we had approached had readily agreed to close their shops. Only one big businessman refused to oblige. Hasan Imam and I went to his shop and there Hasan Imam took off his cap and placed it on the feet of the businessman. The businessman winced and said: "What is this you have done? You could have ordered me to close and I would have done it." The hartal was then complete. The procession we took out was something the like of which had never before been seen in Patna. It extended from Gulzarbagh to the city fort where it was to culminate in a meeting. But as the accommodation was not enough there, we held the meeting on the banks of the Ganga. It passed off peacefully though we had our misgivings that it might get out of hand and clash with the police.

The 6th April Delhi demonstration was a momentous one and unprecedented scenes of Hindu-Muslim unity were witnessed there. People of both the communities jointly faced the bullets. The leader of the mammoth procession, Swami Shraddhanand came forward and offered himself as a target for the bullets. The Muslims were so touched by this gesture of patriotic self-sacrifice that they, in their enthusiasm, carried the Swami aloft to Jumma Masjid and asked him to speak from there.

Gandhiji left for Delhi, but on the way he was arrested. At Palwal, he was made to detrain and taken to an unknown place. Mahadev Desai, who accompanied him, returned to Bombay. It was he who sent me a telegram informing me of the turn of events and asking me to meet him in Bombay. I left immediately.

Gandhiji had been taken to Bombay and was there released. Then, accompanied by Mahadev Desai, he returned to Ahmedabad, learning of disturbances there. I also rushed to

Ahmedabad. When I reached there the next morning, I found the railway station under the control of British troops. I learnt that martial law had been declared in the city. I reached Sabarmati with difficulty and there quiet had been restored as a result of Gandhiji's visit. Within a few hours of my arrival at Sabarmati, martial law was lifted. After restoring peace there, Gandhiji left for Bombay the next day, taking me with him.

Meanwhile, grave reports of widespread disturbances and violent Government repression reached us. At Amritsar, in Jallianwalla Bagh, General Dyer had opened fire on a meeting of unarmed persons, killing a large number of them. Gandhiji was agitated and in the train took the decision to suspend the satyagraha. He felt that in view of the circumstances, it would be improper to continue the satyagraha. He drafted a statement saying that because of the unpreparedness of the people to stick to non-violence, he was compelled to postpone the campaign. The statement was released to the press when we arrived in Bombay.

After a few days in Bombay, I left for Patna where I once again took up my legal practice. Despite the break of eight to ten months during the Champaran struggle, my constant visits to Gandhiji and other preoccupations, my practice was not affected and I continued to have a good clientele and a handsome income.

The first lesson I learnt at Gandhiji's feet at Champaran had brought about such a change in my attitude that even those whom I had had to oppose in principle reposed faith in my word. I feel proud of the fact that, while I practised, the judges trusted me fully. An English judge used to go to the extent of asking me, when the advocacy of my opponent was not adequate, to cite the worst precedent I could think of against my own brief and I never hesitated to do so. But after quoting such an unfavourable precedent, I would adduce another to rebut it. I never put forth a weak argument. I never accepted a case which could not be argued properly. I preferred to tell such a client frankly that there was nothing to be gained by filing his suit. I had found that when a client rejected my advice and approached another lawyer and filed the suit, he almost invariably lost it.

24
Non-co-operation and Khilafat

THE Satyagraha campaign had been withdrawn but discontent among the people went on mounting. The happenings in the Punjab contributed not a little to the anger of the people. That province was subjected to all sorts of excesses under the cloak of martial law. People were humiliated and hundreds were sent behind prison bars for long periods. The outside world then knew little of how the courageous Punjabis bore all the tyrannies, for the province was completely cut off from the rest of the country. None was allowed to get out of the province nor was anyone permitted to enter it. Even letters and telegrams could not be sent or received. Nevertheless, some news trickled out and a wave of anger swept the country. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims participated in all agitations jointly. A remarkable and inspiring feature of the Punjab struggle was the new sense of unity among the people. Together they braved lathi blows, bullets, aerial bombardments, crawled on the ground side by side and drank water from the same pitchers.

The Congress was to hold its next annual session in Amritsar (1920) which was the scene of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The Punjab had been terrorised to such an extent that it was feared it might not be possible to make arrangements for the session. But since the holding of the session in that province had a great significance, it was decided to go ahead with it. Motilal Nehru was elected President. I could not attend the session as I was preoccupied with Hariji's case at Arrah, and he would not allow me to go. The Congress session was to be held in the last week of December 1919 and the case was to open on the second of January 1920. Motilal Nehru was also engaged in that case but he could take it up only some days after it had opened. Meanwhile Sir N. N. Sircar prepared the ground and conducted the case with the assistance of other barristers and lawyers.

Soon after the withdrawal of martial law, the Government appointed an inquiry committee to go into the incidents in

the Punjab. Lord Hunter, an English Judge, was the chairman. The Congress decided to place before the committee evidence at its disposal about the atrocities. When, however, the hearing was in progress difference of opinion arose and the Congress withdrew from the inquiry. It set up a parallel inquiry committee with the same terms of reference as the Hunter Committee. As the proceedings of the Hunter Committee were published in the newspapers, the people for the first time came to know of the magnitude of the atrocities in the Punjab. Gandhiji, Deshbandhu Das, Jayakar, Abbas Tyabji and others visited the ravaged districts of the Punjab and submitted their findings to the Congress Inquiry Committee which published its report in 1920, at the same time as the Hunter Committee.

Britain's attitude towards Turkey had created a ferment among Indian Muslims. She did not honour the promise she had given to the Muslims during the war. Turkey was being dismembered and her headship (Khilafat) of the Muslim world was endangered. Muslim leaders like Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Mohammed Ali and Maulana Azad, who had been under detention during the war, were released about the time of the Amritsar Congress They established Khilafat Committees all over India and started a country-wide agitation. As the Punjab atrocities had alienated the other sections of the people also, support to the Khilafat movement was spontaneous. Many Hindus became members of the Khilafat Committees, giving monetary help, and, as a reciprocal gesture, Muslims joined the Congress in considerable numbers.

Mahatmaji became intimate with the Ali brothers and he used to participate in the meetings of the Khilafat Committee. It was at a meeting of the Khilafat Committee held in Allahabad in April 1920 that he placed before the public for the first time his programme of non-violent civil disobedience. The Committee agreed to act upon his suggestion. The Maulanas supported the programme with religious fervour and declared that any co-operation with the Government would be a sacrilege.

Shaukat Ali visited Patna in April 1920, when a big public meeting was held. The Maulana explained the programme of the non-co-operation movement and asked the people how far they were prepared to implement it. I happened to be in

Patna and was there at the meeting. I was asked to speak. I got up and unhesitatingly declared my readiness to join the movement. Though Gandhiji had made his proposal, the Congress had not yet taken a final decision nor had it chalked out its programme, but this did not prevent me from announcing my decision to join the movement if it was launched. I did realise that it would mean giving up my practice at the Bar and abandoning the idea of seeking a seat in the Bihar Legislative Council in the first elections to be held under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. In fact, I had already toured Champaran which I wanted to represent and at one place Mazharul Haq had addressed a meeting supporting my candidature. Now the die was cast and I had to turn my back on all such ideas.

When the reports of the Hunter and Congress Inquiry Committees were released, a meeting of the A.-I.C.C. was called at Banaras to consider them. I attended the meeting and it was decided to call a special session of the Congress at Calcutta to consider the future course of action. Lajpat Rai, who had returned from abroad after several years' absence, was elected President of the session. Civil disobedience was the talk of the whole country and Gandhiji was busy writing in his *Young India* and other papers explaining the programme and touring the country. At this juncture, the Congress suffered a great loss—Lokamanya Tilak passed away on August 1, 1920.

The special session of the Congress was to be held in September and in the meantime we convened a meeting of the Bihar Provincial Political Conference at Bhagalpur in August. I was asked to preside. I was hesitant to accept as I was a confirmed supporter of the non-co-operation movement and I was doubtful whether the people would accept the programme and whether, even if they accepted it, many would actually join the movement. I, therefore, sought the advice of Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha and asked him if I would be precipitating a crisis by my plain speaking. He replied that I was free to state my views and the Conference was free to accept or reject them. He asked me to accept the presidentship and express my views in a forthright manner.

I started writing my presidential speech in Hindi, which was not the vogue at conferences then. The pressure of professional work, coupled with political activities, was too much

for me and I fell ill. I was afraid I would not be able to attend the Bhagalpur session at all. However, my health improved and I was able to reach the place in time. The problems confronting the conference were so momentous and complex as to cause misgivings even in the minds of experienced persons. My feelings therefore could well be imagined. I was convinced about the necessity for non-co-operation, but many of the old leaders of the province were against it. Although public meetings had been attracting large crowds during the anti-Rowlatt Act agitation, it was a moot point how many would actually come forward to join the new movement. Many of the senior leaders were not to attend the conference, in which case the responsibility of implementing the conference's decision in favour of non-co-operation would fall entirely on the younger generation. Considerations like these unnerved me.

On the eve of the Bhagalpur conference, we received a telegram from Gandhiji asking us to support the non-co-operation programme. At the conference I made a bold appeal in my presidential address for the acceptance of the programme. Braj Kishore Prasad, Dharni Dhar and others also advocated the cause forcefully. A large number of Muslims like Mazharul Haq, Shah Mohammed Zuber, Mohammed Shafi, Nurul Hasan and others also supported us. But prominent Muslim leaders like Hasan Imam, Sarfaraz Hussein Khan and others were ranged against us. On one side was experience and public service and on the other were enthusiasm, discontent born of an unbearable situation in the country and keenness to plunge into the struggle.

The conference endorsed my views and adopted a resolution supporting the principle of non-co-operation and set up a committee to formulate a programme having in view the situation in Bihar. Braj Kishore Prasad, the foremost leader present at the conference, argued eloquently in favour of adding the demand of Swaraj to the demands for justice in the Punjab and for restoring the Khilafat of the Muslim world. Till then in meetings and newspapers, the Punjab massacre and the Khilafat were stated to be the only causes of the projected non-co-operation. Braj Kishore Prasad wanted to impart stability to the movement which was to continue till the attainment of independence. This suggestion too was accepted.

A few days earlier, the Gujerat Provincial Political Conference had also passed a resolution on similar lines. As far as I remember, Bihar and Gujerat were the only two provinces to adopt such a stand before the special Calcutta session of the Congress.

I could not attend the Calcutta session unlike C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru who were also engaged in the Burma case. My presence was necessary at Arrah. The session itself was a great success and it endorsed the non-co-operation resolution by a large majority. To the demands relating to the Khilafat and the Punjab, it added the demand of Swaraj. To Gandhiji this made no difference in objective as he had all along been of the view that if the Government accepted our demands on Khilafat and the Punjab massacre, it would be tantamount to their acceptance of our desire for Swaraj also.

A few days after the Calcutta Congress, the A.I.C.C. met in Bombay to consider ways and means of implementing the non-co-operation resolution. I had now to consider seriously the question of giving up my practice. Hariji's case in Arrah was nearly at an end. I was soon relieved. But it was obvious that there would be appeals to the High Court and the Privy Council, and Hariji wanted me to be at his disposal for at least that case. Having worked on the case for a long time, I was not able to turn down his request. But I decided not to accept fresh briefs. Though, owing to my preoccupation at Arrah, I had not been working at the High Court for nearly a year, I still had a few cases pending at Patna. Against some of these briefs I had accepted money. I had not made up my mind about such cases.

I had not consulted my brother about my decision although he must have had an inkling of it. Though he had hoped that I would earn well and improve the family finances which were in an unenviable state, he did not utter a word of opposition. Many other lawyers gave up practice along with me, but people consoled themselves with the thought that the movement would end in a year and we would return to our work. But I had no such illusions because Swaraj was an aim of the movement and I saw no prospect of an early realisation of our demand.

After my return from Bombay I convened a meeting at my house of all those friends who had supported the programme.

We discussed our future and the question of giving up our practice. My decision not to abandon the clients to whom I was already committed was construed by some as an excuse for continuing my practice. In my own mind I was clear. I was representing a general case. As a matter of fact I had been almost absent from the Patna High Court for a year. The old cases had ended. I had not accepted any new briefs during this period. The cases in my hand were therefore much less than what they used to be. Still, because I had usually a very large number of cases, those left were quite many. I stuck to my point and explained that in the cases for which I had already taken remuneration and which were in progress, it was not fair to the clients to leave the work incomplete and I said that this was applicable to other lawyers too. Ultimately my proposal was accepted. But, actually, I did not have to appear in the High Court in any other case except Hariji's. I returned the remuneration taken or entrusted the case to a friend or in some cases the clients left me.

The other matter that we discussed was the boycott of Government and Government-aided schools and colleges. I gave a warning that success might not be ours in this direction. I had had the experience of agitation against Government educational institutions in Calcutta during the anti-Partition movement in Bengal. The people behind the movement had decided to set up a national educational institution. The National Council of Education they had set up succeeded in enlisting the help of persons who were something more than mere political figures. With the sympathy of people like Sir Gurudas Banerjee, retired Judge of the Calcutta High Court and a former Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, and Binay Kumar Sarkar, a famous writer, the Council was confident of the success of the movement. But there was not much enthusiasm for the boycott of Government institutions because people educated in their national counterparts did not have alternative avenues of employment. I, therefore, felt that if we laid too much emphasis on that phase of our programme now, we would not be able to get much response from students and parents and the whole movement would fizzle out just because of this. Some of my friends did not like my opposition and felt that I was trying to be over-cautious.

Few people realise that in our country education is merely a means of earning one's livelihood. A person who goes in for education has to earn. He is so moulded that he cannot carry on in the old ways. He takes to expensive ways of living. Parents invest a lot of money on the education of their children in the hope that after finishing their studies they would help in maintaining the family income, if not in increasing it. The very nature of English education is such that after leaving the university one cannot think of anything but joining Government service or one of the professions like law or medicine. At first, when the number of educated people was not large, they were able to earn a decent living without difficulty, but with the spread of education and the consequent increase in the educated population, opportunities of earning have progressively decreased. There is a keen tussle for positions. Despite this, the attraction of English education in preference to national education in the matter of securing employment is still there. I, therefore, felt that we should first campaign for the boycott of English schools by students and only if the response was good should we open national institutions. I also felt that once a national institution was opened, it must run efficiently and continuously. I was not in favour therefore of opening institutes of learning and conducting examinations.

Some of my friends felt that students would not leave their present schools and colleges unless we opened alternative institutions for them. They said that national institutions were necessary for the success of the non-co-operation movement in that sphere. I did not want such bait to be used for promoting boycott of schools. I felt that a clear appeal to them in the name of the country giving a proper appraisal of the drawbacks of English education would be preferable. If the students joined us after understanding the implications, their non-co-operation would be more enduring. On the other hand, if they joined the movement thinking that their education and their employment-securing capacity would not be affected because of the alternative we offered, their association with the boycott movement would be short-lived because once they saw their hopes were falsified they would be disheartened and would go back to their old institutions. I therefore urged that students should be told frankly that they had a thorny path before them and

would have to face privation and sufferings. A national institution would come later, I said.

It was not that I was blind to the drawbacks of education as imparted in government institutions. It was apparent to me that it was rotten. Because of the medium of instruction being a foreign language, it involved colossal waste of energy and time. It could not lead to that natural development of personality which can be so easily attained through proper education given in one's own language. Obviously our students cannot have much time for thinking and meditating when all the while they are busy memorising the meaning of foreign words. For this reason alone the system is wasteful. It is not wrong to learn a foreign language. It is good to learn one, particularly today when knowledge of at least one European language has become almost obligatory. But to study a language in order to acquire a working knowledge of it is one thing and to learn every subject through its medium is another. So I have always expressed my opposition to making a foreign tongue the medium of instruction but not to learning it for its own sake. The British had their reasons for making Indians learn their language. They wanted a class of people who could work for and co-operate with them; they wanted to create a privileged class of Indians who would be like Englishmen in their thinking and outlook. They wanted another cheaper class which could do all the work in the offices in English. They thought that if they could get English-knowing men to assist them they would be saved the bother of learning the Indian languages themselves. It was this policy that formed the foundation of our system of education. Of course, the system did produce men of independent thought and action. But they formed an exception and the rule was clerks and office-workers who thought they had got the reward for their education. I could certainly have nothing to do with such a system but I wanted the idea of national education popularised gradually. On the other hand we were all reminded of the advice given by Gandhiji when we wanted to start a college on the model of the Fergusson College in Poona in Champaran for which we had even collected funds: he had said that it was no use opening a college in any way connected with the Government. If a new institution had to be opened, it must start with a new national

system of education. But the difficulties were colossal and I was cautious.

While we were thus feeling our way, Mazharul Haq opened a national school with Ram Kishore Lal Nand Keolyar, Bar-at-Law, who had returned from England some time previously, as headmaster. Meanwhile, Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Mohammed Ali and Maulana Azad had started on a country-wide tour, educating the people for the campaign. They met with some success at the Banaras Hindu University and Aligarh Muslim University. In Bihar, their visit created unprecedented enthusiasm among the students. It was at this time that the two national institutions, the Kashi Vidyapith and the Jamia Millia of Delhi, were founded.

I had been a member of the Patna University Senate and Syndicate and I now decided to resign from both the bodies though not before I had completed one job on which my mind was set. The University had appointed a committee to suggest reforms in the light of recommendations made by the Sadler Commission on the affairs of Calcutta University and I was a member of the committee. I had worked hard to have the mother-tongue accepted as the medium of instruction at least up to the Matriculation standard. It was a hotly debated issue in the committee. I felt that if I succeeded in getting the recommendation accepted, it would help the cause of national education. Many prominent persons of Bihar were opposed to my view as they felt that if English was not taught from the beginning, the standard of education of the boys would be lowered and that, in the race for progress, the nation would be left far behind. These men were so strongly under the spell of English that even the Sadler Commission's emphasis on the use of mother-tongue in education did not affect their attitude.

When the Senate met, I made a strong appeal for the adoption of my resolution. Among those who opposed the resolution were Sultan Ahmed, Khwaja Mohammed Noor, Justice Jwala Prasad and Prof. Jadunath Sarkar. Among the supporters, surprisingly enough, were two Englishmen, Prof. Hamilton and Prof. Duke. I had never spoken to or had an exchange of views with them. The resolution was carried by a majority. The Senate recommended the amendment of the University rules to enable schools to impart education through

the medium of the mother-tongue up to Matriculation. Having succeeded in my desire, I resigned from the Senate and Syndicate.

Sir Havilland Le Misurier, member of the Governor's Executive Council and of the University Senate, was reported to have very much regretted my exit from the two bodies. I heard that it was at his instance that the official members of the Senate had voted for my resolution for, thereby, he had thought I could be persuaded to stay in the Senate. Pressure was indeed brought to bear upon me to withdraw my resignation, but having decided to join the non-co-operation movement I could no longer continue my association with the University.

The Senate recommendation, however, remained only on the records and nothing was done to implement it. It is a moot point, however, whether, had I continued my membership of the Senate, I would have succeeded in seeing the resolution translated into action. Only in recent years has the mother-tongue been adopted as the medium of instruction up to Matriculation in all subjects, except Mathematics.

25

Bihar Vidyapith and Sadaqat Ashram

After the passage of the non-co-operation resolution at the Calcutta Congress session, I withdrew my candidature for the Legislative Council elections which were to come off in November 1920. Boycott of elections was made the first item in the non-co-operation programme in Bihar. We advocated the withdrawal of nominations by candidates and complete boycott of the polling booths by the voters. Congress workers toured the province and held meetings at which the programme was explained to the people. I should say we had limited success. While many candidates did stand for election—nomination papers being filed from all constituencies—and some were returned unopposed, hardly 20 per cent of the electorate voted in Bihar.

At this time an incident occurred in the village of Lauriya in Champaran district which caused no little stir in the province. Since the Champaran agitation, there had been a great awakening among the kisans. They set up kisan sabhas through which they could ventilate their grievances against the landlords. This and the extension of the franchise in the new Constitution frightened the landlords, who, in order to safeguard their interests, made common cause with the white indigo planters. They set up an organisation with branches all over the province. The Maharaja of Darbhanga was its chairman. This development enraged the kisans and the educated classes. The Provincial Political Conference took note of this and openly challenged the landlords' action.

Meanwhile, a constructive worker, Ram Raksha Brahmachari, had started doing welfare work in the village of Machargaon in Champaran district. He was welcomed by the people and, in consultation with me, he did splendid work there. He opened schools, set up sanitation committees and started panchayats to settle disputes. The whole work was directed from an ashram, each villager contributing two handfuls of grain a day to defray the expenses. The landlords

naturally did not take kindly to it and in this they had the sympathy of the police.

On a concocted complaint lodged by a landlord, the police official of the area sent a posse of constables to Lauriya to investigate the complaint. The police tried to arrest some people on the charge of abetting a supposed crime. When the villagers refused to go with the police, the officer sent for the military police. Subsequently a number of villages were subjected to loot and arson. The villagers, including their womenfolk, were badly handled by the police. Some men, in sheer panic, ran away from their homes, even abandoning their wives and children. Brahmachari and his colleagues came to know of this and exposed the happenings in the newspapers. This landed them in jail. The Bihar Congress Committee, under the presidentship of Mazharul Haq, set up an inquiry committee to report on the incident. The committee corroborated the public complaints and questioned the official version of the incident.

In December, when this agitation was in full swing, Gandhiji arrived in Bihar. He visited Lauriya and the neighbouring villages and questioned the people of the area. He then told them that in fleeing their homes and abandoning their wives, the men had shown great cowardice. It was the duty of the menfolk to protect the women and children with their lives. True *ahimsa* lay in dying while resisting non-violently. To run away out of fear was, Gandhiji felt, worse than committing violence. Even violent resistance was, therefore, preferable to running away from danger. The villagers drew sustenance from Gandhiji's words and the agitation gained momentum. The case against Brahmachari and others continued for several months but in the end the charges were proved to be false and the arrested men were released.

The Council elections were over and we turned to the boycott of schools. We decided to start a national college and rented a building on the Patna-Gaya road. I had given up my practice, vacated the house for which I was paying a rent of Rs. 150 a month and took up residence in the new college premises. I gave all my law books to a friend, Shambu Saran Varma; after his untimely death, they passed into the hands of another friend.

The National College had the same courses of study as the other colleges. I was made the Principal and among the staff were such personalities as Badri Nath Varma, Professor of English at the B. N. College, Jagannath Prasad, Professor of Sanskrit at the Patna College, and Prem Sunder Bose, Professor of Philosophy at the T. N. J. College, all of whom gave up lucrative careers to join the new venture. Besides these friends, we had Jagat Narain Lal, Ram Charitra Sinha, Abdul Bari and others to help us.

When the official examinations were approaching in other colleges, some of us felt that such of our students as did not want to sit for the official examinations should be provided with the facility of a test in our own college. So we arranged for an examination.

Gandhiji wanted us to establish a National University but our problem was one of finance. So Gandhiji, when he came on another tour of Bihar, collected more than Rs. 50,000 in Jharia alone and sent me a telegram asking me to arrange for the setting up of the University. Gandhiji came and inaugurated the University which was housed in the same building as the college. Mazharul Haq was appointed Vice-Chancellor. We set up a Senate and began formulating a curriculum.

This development attracted even the students of the Government colleges. One day about sixty students left the Patna College and the Science College and came in a body to seek admission to the National University. Some of the best students of Patna University were among them. Some of them graduated from our institution and are today occupying responsible positions in the province. A few who left us and rejoined Government colleges and took to Government service are in high administrative posts today.

Then in nearly all the districts we opened national schools which were affiliated to the Bihar Vidyapith. Some of them provided instruction up to the Matriculation standard, others to a lower standard. The number of Matriculation schools rose to 50, while the primary schools numbered well over 200. Thus the Vidyapith could boast of between 20,000 and 25,000 alumni. Many who had left their jobs became teachers in these institutions.

Some time before the opening of the National College,

students of the Patna Engineering School had gone on strike on account of differences with the Principal. They came to Mazharul Haq and told him that they had left school and wanted him to help them. Mazharul Haq, fearless, kind, sympathetic, generous and capable of immense sacrifice, was a rich man who lived in a palatial house, Sikandar Manzil, on Fraser Road in Patna. He was constructing a new bungalow for himself but when he heard the boys' appeal for help, he abandoned the construction and shifted to a house in a mango grove on the Patna-Danapur road, on the banks of the Ganga, and lived with the boys there. It was winter and it was particularly cold but he put up with it. He constructed a number of palm leaf huts for the students to stay. From a desolate place, he converted the area into a garden sprinkled with huts and pulsating with activity. He erected a factory for manufacturing spinning wheels which was run entirely by the boys. As time passed, he put up more tenements and all the boys were rehabilitated in what came to be called the Sadaqat Ashram. Here shifted the National College and here was established the Bihar Vidyapith, a new university inspired by Gandhiji's ideas. Mazharul Haq spent his money for the betterment of the boys among whom he lived, sharing their humble meal. Most of the boys were Hindus but they considered him their father and he, on his part, treated them without any distinction of caste or creed.

I am reminded of an incident which reveals his greatness. A poor Muslim boy, Mohammed Khalil, was living in the Sadaqat Ashram. He was an intelligent boy and, though a Muslim, was very proficient in Hindi and Sanskrit. His name became famous throughout Bihar because of a national song he had composed during the non-co-operation movement. About a year after the Ashram was established he came to me saying that Mazharul Haq had ejected him from the Ashram and sought my help for re-entry. I agreed to help him and went with him to Mazharul Haq. When I requested Mazharul Haq to pardon Khalil, he looked at me for a while and said feelingly: " I have never turned down a request from you but now you do not know what you are asking for. He has committed a grave crime and I cannot pardon him. He has behaved in a manner contrary to my cherished ideals

which are dearer to me than life itself, and has sought to destroy what I have tried to build up here and for which I have adopted a life of poverty. I have dedicated my life to Hindu-Muslim unity and worked for it without once swerving from the path. Khalil has sought to undo my life's work by attempting to convert Hindu boys to Islam. His scholarship in Hindi and Sanskrit are mere cloaks for his secret designs. He is capable of playing upon communal feelings and bringing about Hindu-Muslim riots. If I admit him I would be a party to a breach of trust with the Hindu boys. No, I can never take Khalil back into the Ashram."

Mohammed Khalil came to be later known as Khalil Das who, the public feel, was at the bottom of communal riots at several places, resulting in the loss of many Hindu and Muslim lives. When I heard of these reports I realised how true were the words of Mazharul Haq.

26

The Non-co-operation Campaign

It was at the historic annual session of the Congress at Nagpur in December 1920 that the exact details of the non-co-operation programme were finally drawn up. I was unable to attend it owing to reasons of health. Believing that there would be a battle royal between the opposing sections there was a record attendance at the session, but such expectations were belied and the session reached a compromise, with minor changes to the original programme. The final plan was as follows.

Four boycotts constituted the main programme: (1) surrendering of titles and distinctions conferred by the Government, (2) severence of connections with Government and Government-aided schools and colleges, (3) boycott of Legislative Councils, and (4) boycott of courts, that is, avoiding litigation and giving up legal practice.

To this programme, giving up of Government service was later added. On *ad hoc* instructions being received, people were asked to start no-tax campaigns. Establishment of national schools, setting up of panchayats to settle disputes, propagation of the use of the spinning wheel, boycott of foreign cloth and propaganda for prohibition also formed part of the movement. The session laid great emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity and non-violence.

After the Nagpur session, even waverers became staunch supporters of non-co-operation. Mahatma Gandhi told the people that if they carried out the programme faithfully, Swaraj would be theirs within a year. People then set out assiduously to implement the programme.

The movement was catching the popular imagination in Bihar as elsewhere when Maurice Hallett, Secretary of the Bihar and Orissa Government (who later retired as the Governor of U.P. during the Second World War), sent out a circular directing the members and employees of the Municipalities and District Boards not to participate in the non-co-operation movement. The people resented this order. The title of Rai Saheb had been conferred on my brother

for his work in the co-operative movement and he was Vice-Chairman of the Chapra Municipality as also an honorary magistrate. He renounced his title and resigned his magistrateship. But he said he would continue to work in the municipality as before as he had been elected by the people. His action was voluntary and I had not made any request to him to join the movement.

His son, Janardan, had just then joined the Engineering College of Banaras Hindu University. My elder son, Mrityunjaya, was studying in the Matriculation class but was not allowed to sit for the University examination on account of being under-age. My younger son, Dhananjaya, was studying in a lower class. We withdrew all the boys from the institutions. They never again entered any Government institution. Janardan worked as an apprentice in the Kirtyanand Iron and Steel Works and after a year got a scholarship for training in metallurgy in London where he was able to carry on on his own. Mrityunjaya joined the Bihar Vidyapith from where he graduated. Dhananjaya studied in the national school at Chapra as long as it existed and then continued studies at home. Our family was thus able to implement the non-co-operation programme to the full.

The Congress was not well organised at that time in Bihar. There was a Provincial Congress Committee whose secretary was Sarfraz Hussain Khan to whom I gave all possible help. There were district congress committees also but there was no regular membership and there were no proper elections. One had only to pay Rs. 10 as fee and get a certificate from the secretary of the district or provincial committee to become a delegate to a Congress session. These delegates elected the members of the A.-I.C.C. But it was almost taken for granted that those who paid Rs. 100 as membership fee would be elected members of the A.-I.C.C. The Bihar Provincial Congress Committee had to pay Rs. 1,500 as subscription every year to the Central Committee. But we were not generally able to fulfil our quota and in 1920 Bihar was in arrears of several thousands of rupees.

The Nagpur session of the Congress changed all this. New rules and regulations were framed making enrolment of members compulsory. Each province was authorised to send

to the Congress sessions one delegate for every 100,000 of its population. Delegates had to be now elected at regular meetings of the congress committees. A list of the elected delegates had to be sent to the office of the A.-I.C.C. some days prior to the Congress session. Without sufficient reasons a change in the list was not to be accepted.

The Provincial Congress Committees were directed to change their rules in accordance with the Nagpur Constitution. Fresh elections under the new rules were also to be held. Many old Congressmen had left us because some of them were unable to accept the new creed and programme of the Congress and others, while accepting the creed, were unable to support the programme. In order to re-organise the whole structure, the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee set up a Reorganisation Committee, with Mazharul Haq as president and me as secretary, to report before the next provincial Congress elections. The committee had also to enrol members as well as carry on propaganda for the non-co-operation programme.

Public meetings were the order of the day in Bihar. There was not one little corner of the province where the Congress message did not penetrate. Congress workers were active every day, explaining the Congress programme. The whole province was agog. I toured the entire length and breadth of Bihar in 1920 and for the first time I saw the whole province and made innumerable contacts.

.I became an adept at public speaking. Hitherto I had not had much opportunity to address public meetings though my practice at the Bar had given me considerable experience in the art of speaking. Now I had to address meetings every day and I got over my natural shyness and began to speak with the utmost confidence. I spoke in Bhojpuri in the Bhojpuri areas: in other places in Hindi. I even remember to have addressed meetings in Bengali in Purulia but that was probably much later. Meetings of 5,000 to 10,000 were quite common and I was able to make myself quite audible to such audiences. But at meetings of 20,000 people or over, I had to make special efforts to be heard, loudspeakers not being then in vogue, with rather unhappy results for my stomach. Once in Hathua, in Chapra district, where I was to address a meeting, somehow

word had gone round that Mahatma Gandhi would address it and people gathered in their thousands. There were over 50,000 people present and, try as I might, my words could not reach them all.

The duration of my speeches depended on the strength of the audience. Where the crowd was large I had necessarily to limit my speech to half an hour at the most. At smaller meetings I spoke for even 90 minutes. At such times, my speeches were comprehensive, covering the history of the Congress, the Khilafat agitation, the Punjab atrocities, the non-co-operation programme and the demand for Swaraj. I could sense the mood and the reaction of my audience and was quite effective in my presentation of the nationalist case.

In March 1921, the A.-I.C.C. met at Vijayawada. It decided to collect a crore of rupees before June 30 as a memorial to the late Lokamanya Tilak—the Tilak Swaraj Fund—to be spent on Swaraj work. It was also decided to enrol one crore primary members and put into use 20 lakh spinning wheels.

Gandhiji had been touring the country before leaving for Vijayawada. I joined him in Orissa which was in the grip of a famine. He had known about it earlier and had rendered instant help. Now when he saw the ravages of the famine personally, his heart bled for the sufferers, who hearing of his arrival, flocked to Cuttack from far and near. He had been put up in a biggish house and elaborate preparations had been made to welcome him. The contrasting pictures of the grand temple of Jagannath, with its pandas and pomp and splendour, and the rich people of Orissa leading a life of ease and plenty as also the preparations for giving Gandhiji a grand welcome on the one hand; and the utter misery and the emaciated appearance of the poor people who came in their thousands to see him on the other, affected him so deeply that he was moved to tears. He described graphically the sufferings of the people in an article in the newspapers and appealed for food and clothing for the victims of the famine.

At one of the meetings in Orissa, Gandhiji was asked why he was so much against English education when men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Lokamanya Tilak and he himself, who were the products of that very education, had risen to

great heights. Gandhiji, in his characteristic manner, replied: "I am a mere nonentity. But as for Lokamanya, he would have been a much greater man had he not been forced to study through the medium of English, a foreign tongue. Where do Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Lokamanya stand in comparison with Shankaracharya, Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh and Kabir? They had in their days none of the communication facilities that we enjoy today. Even then they were able to revolutionise the world of thought."

He said that it was our ill-advised attachment to English education that led us to give it credit for the country's progress. To learn English was not bad but it could not obviously be the medium of instruction in the schools.

Then we left for Vijayawada. The scenes of enthusiasm we witnessed in Andhra are indescribable. We saw mammoth meetings where full-throated patriotic slogans rent the air. At every railway station there were crowds of people. They even lined the track though the train passed through at full speed without stopping. At Vijayanagaram, where we detrained at three in the morning, we saw the town illuminated, which reminded us of a Diwali night.

While returning from Vijayawada, the Bihar representatives to the A.-I.C.C. conferred among themselves in the train and decided on the exact programme to be followed in their province. On our return we set about collecting money for the Swaraj Fund. To obviate the need of writing a receipt every time a subscription was paid, we got receipts printed for various amounts, the smallest amount accepted being four annas. Moving about was quite a strain and there were many interesting incidents. I was to cover Bundu, Khunti and Lohardaga. We left Ranchi early in the morning after breakfast, seven of us including the driver and the cleaner, in a ramshackle car. After covering some distance the car developed some defect and we were stranded for hours on end in the midst of a jungle, reaching Bundu only at 6 p.m. after the big gathering had dispersed. The village meeting was, however, very encouraging and we collected eight hundred rupees. As we had only tamarind fruits for our lunch the villagers persuaded us to stay on for dinner. We again left at 11 p.m. and after an hour found that the car which it had taken hours

to repair had again suffered a break-down. For some time we sat quietly in the car listening to the roar of a tiger and expecting it to appear any moment. When the roar was heard no more, we took shelter in a *Dak Bungalow* which happened to be near by. We could reach Ranchi just in time for our Patna train and had to skip both Khunti and Lohardaga. Congressmen worked so enthusiastically and the response of the middle class was so generous that by June 30 we were able to collect seven to eight lakhs of rupees.

It took us several months to complete the work of reorganisation of the provincial Congress. By the end of June 1921, the district Congress committees had elected members of the Provincial Congress Committee and shortly afterwards the provincial committee was able to hold the election for membership of the A.-I.C.C.

The leaders who left the Congress founded a new party called the Bihar Provincial League. The moderate press of the country welcomed it but the party made no headway and after a short period nothing more was heard of it. In spite of differences in viewpoints, however, the old and the new leaders maintained their social contacts and no serious conflict ever arose in Bihar.

27

The "Desh" and "The Searchlight"

THE reorganisation of the Provincial Congress Committee brought to the fore the question of an effective newspaper medium to sponsor its cause. Bihar, at that time, was not well served by newspapers and it was necessary to strengthen some of them, if not to start new ones. Some time earlier, *The Bihar Times* and *The Bihari* had been brought out after considerable difficulty. The first was founded by the late Mahesh Narain and the second was financially helped by Banaili Raj. Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, who was greatly interested in journalism, besides bringing out his own *Hindustan Review* helped these papers with money and articles. But the papers soon ran into difficulties and had to close down. *The Express,* started with the help of the Maharaja of Hathua, after running at a loss for some time, also closed down.

In 1918, the leaders of Patna, prominent among whom were Dr. Sinha and Hasan Imam, feeling the need for a newspaper, had started a bi-weekly and called it *The Searchlight*. Among the directors were Dr. Sinha, Hasan Imam, Braj Kishore Prasad and myself. When the non-co-operation movement began we went into a conference to decide what stand the paper should take. Dr. Sinha and Hasan Imam were opposed to the movement while Braj Kishore Prasad, Murli Manohar Prasad, the editor of the paper, and I favoured non-co-operation. There was so much enthusiasm for the movement, however, that the paper could have opposed the movement only at the cost of its popularity. So we decided that the paper should not editorially support the movement but publish objective reports without taking sides on the issue. It was also decided that it should take signed articles expounding both points of view.

There was another reason for this decision on the policy of the paper. The non-co-operation movement had shifted politics from the drawing rooms of the educated and the businessmen to the huts in the countryside, to the tillers of the soil. English was of no use as a medium of communication with this

vast mass of humanity. Anyone who wanted to reach the
had to do it through an Indian language. In 1920 som
had launched a Hindi weekly, *Desh*, edited by me and
at the Searchlight Press. We thought that the *Desh* wo
better medium than *The Searchlight* for placing the ne
gress programme before the masses. The *Desh* pro
immense help in our propaganda. Some of us had inter
write articles in *The Searchlight* too, but because of o
occupation with the movement we could not do so. Th
itself was effective and its circulation went up. We
getting quite a number of advertisements but the m
had made the mistake of gradually reducing the adverti
rates, with the result that, as the circulation went on
our losses kept pace. My colleagues and I were too preoc
to devote any attention to the management and we w
to the real state of affairs rather late, when the losses had b
unmanageable. When the non-co-operation movement
the circulation of the paper fell and eventually we c
down.

The Searchlight followed the policy of non-alignment
question of non-co-operation for some time. Then Dr.
and Hasan Imam, who had built up the paper with
money and hard work, magnanimously handed over the
to us and severed their connections with it. Since the
Searchlight has been a full-fledged Congress paper.
during the 1930-34 satyagraha, the Congress declare
such of the papers as were unable to publish factual ne
express their views fearlessly should suspend publication
than submit to Government orders, *The Searchlight* w
of the few papers to abide by the directive.

The paper, however, was never free from financial diffi
So, in 1941, the paper was handed over to Messrs.
Brothers on the condition that the editorial policy of the
should not be altered. Since then, the Birla Brothers
spent large sums on it. During the 1942 movement, wh
paper was just getting out of its financial troubles, the G
ment stopped its publication and arrested the editor.*

* The paper later resumed publication—*Publishers.*

28

Repression

THE meaning of the remarkable enthusiasm roused among the people by our propaganda was not lost on the Government. The masses were getting bold and the prestige of the Government among the people was declining fast. The Government waited for an opportunity to scotch the agitation. One act of violence was all that it wanted so that it might strike with all the force it could command but that was exactly what the Congress wanted to avoid. The Congress was careful to keep the people's exuberance within bounds. After the Nagpur session, the Provincial Congress Committee issued a special directive laying emphasis on non-violence. The theme of every speech and every pamphlet was non-violence.

Unfortunately, owing to scarcity conditions and the high cost of living, looting of shops had occurred in several places in Muzaffarpur district and at a few places in Darbhanga and Champaran districts. Thus the Government got the opportunity it had been waiting for and it did not come a day too soon. We had been successfully carrying on a campaign against the drink evil, with telling effect on the excise revenue of the Government. Now the strong arm of law reached out against all and sundry, in Muzaffarpur and the neighbouring districts. Repression was unleashed in full force. In Champaran, the Government had not given the people any respite since the Lauriya incident and now things were even worse. Under Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code many were called upon to furnish security for good behaviour or, in default, to suffer imprisonment. Section 144 Cr. P.C. was imposed, banning processions and meetings. Many went to prison and none furnished security.

The Congress workers were not to blame for the looting, on the pretext of which repression was launched. When looting by some miscreants occurred Congress workers rushed to the scene and succeeded in restoring peace. They also advised the people to be ready to resist looters and dacoits. But the Government was bent on suppressing the movement and, instead of

bringing the looters to book, struck out against Congress workers.

The Chief Secretary of Bihar, Rainey, issued a circular to district officers to suppress the movement. The Secretary of the Local Self-Government Department, Hallett, issued another circular directing the members and employees of district boards and municipalities to keep away from the movement. District officers started issuing orders under Section 144 Cr. P.C. indiscriminately and sent people to prison in hundreds.

Once I left for Arrah to address a meeting. As I detrained I was served with a notice under Section 144 restraining me from joining a meeting or procession in the town between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. as it would cause disturbance to students who were then appearing for the Matriculation examination. The Nagpur Congress had stated that satyagraha should not be started until it issued the orders. The Provincial Congress Committee itself had sent out circulars asking Congressmen not to disobey official orders unless they were such that one had to vindicate one's self-respect. I, therefore, abided by the order and went to a village outside the municipal limits of Arrah where I addressed a hastily arranged public meeting. At 5-30 p.m., when the period stipulated in the order had expired, I went over to the town and addressed the scheduled meeting and fulfilled my programme!

The Bihar Legislative Council was then in session. Those very persons who had stood for election despite the Congress directive to boycott the Council now raised the question of official circulars and demanded their withdrawal. When the Council proceedings were published in the newspapers, other provinces joined in the criticism of the high-handed action of the Bihar Government. At about that time Lee, S.D.O., Sitamarhi in Muzaffarpur district, who had earned notoriety for his repressive acts, was transferred.

The authorities did all they could to hinder the prohibition campaign of Congressmen wherever it was undertaken. They took severe action against Congress workers and openly sought to spread the drink habit.

One of the principal items on our programme was the establishment of panchayats, which we fulfilled in a great measure. We set up a number of panchayats which began settling dis-

putes effectively. At one place, the panchayat acquired so much authority that it worked almost like a regular court of law. People filed cases and paid court fees. Most of the decisions were accepted by the people and only in some cases did trouble arise. There were two difficulties. One was that the people began to bring in long-standing disputes to the panchayats. If the panchayats rejected them as being time-barred, the people bitterly criticised the panchayats as being no better than other courts. On the other hand, if the panchayats took up the disputes and gave their decision, there was no means of enforcing it against the parties concerned. Another difficulty was that social boycott was resorted to as punishment and, though we discouraged this, our directives were sometimes ignored and there were occasional clashes with the police.

29

Hindu-Muslim Unity and Propagation of Khadi

THE A.-I.C.C. met in Bombay in July 1921. I attended the meeting. There was a sense of satisfaction among the delegates at the progress of our non-co-operation campaign. The target of collecting a crore of rupees for the Tilak Swarajya Fund had been attained. Great progress had been achieved in sponsoring the use of the spinning wheel. Hindu-Muslim unity was at its height and any differences between the two communities seemed to be a thing of the distant past. It was the general consensus of opinion that such circumstances were propitious for the immediate launching of satyagraha.

Further, the Government had launched on its policy of repression and had alienated the people still more. This was an opportune moment for the Congress to play its trump card of satyagraha and it could certainly count on the people rallying round its banner. The Congress workers also were primed for the struggle. Though the movement so far had been peaceful and constitutional, the tone of the speeches of Congressmen had shown a boldness which augured well for the future struggle. So the delegates argued that we should not delay satyagraha any longer.

Gandhiji, however, counselled patience. He laid emphasis on the full implementation of the programme chalked out and only then, he said, could we hope for the success of satyagraha. He asked Congressmen to implement the programme of popularising spinning and the boycott of foreign cloth up to September 30. So we decided to concentrate on the preparatory work and satyagraha was postponed. But something happened at this juncture, bringing satyagraha nearer.

The Government announced that the Prince of Wales would be visiting India in the following winter. Lord Reading had then succeeded Lord Chelmsford as Viceroy. Lord Chelmsford had said that he was puzzled and perplexed by the Congress movement. Perhaps Lord Reading, considered to be

one of the cleverest diplomats of Britain, had come to India to unravel the puzzle. As the United Kingdom's Ambassador in the United States, he was credited with having persuaded America to enter the First World War on the side of Britain. He had later become Lord Chief Justice and his assignment in India had, perhaps, some special meaning. We thought the Prince of Wales's visit was his idea.

Perhaps the British statesman thought that history would repeat itself. When, at the time of the anti-Partition agitation, the Government's repressive policy had failed, the visit of King George V for his coronation darbar in India had roused a wave of enthusiasm among the people. Lord Reading probably thought that the Prince of Wales might similarly rouse in the people a feeling of loyalty and that the movement might die down. We could think of no other reason for the sudden visit of the Prince.

The A.-I.C.C. demanded the abandonment of the idea by Government, saying that it was not proper to make use of the Prince of Wales and the future King of England to bolster Government's declining prestige in the country. The resolution warned the Government that if it did not heed the Congress demand, the A.-I.C.C. would be compelled to call on the people to boycott the Prince's visit and all arrangements connected with it, although the Congress had no ill-will against the Prince and had only the highest respect for him. This was almost a notice to the Government that it would be precipitating the very satyagraha it was seeking to avert.

The festival of Id was nearing. In Bihar and U.P., it was considered an occasion to be delicately handled because at places where cows were sacrificed Hindu-Muslim riots had sometimes occurred. We were afraid that if rioting took place it would mar the communal concord which was then at its height. On the other hand, we thought that the festival should be used to bring the communities closer together. We carried on a vigorous propaganda towards that end. Gandhiji told us that it would be impossible to protect the cow by fighting with the Muslims, nor would cow protection be worth much if it was achieved at the cost of communal unity. He, therefore, advised the Hindus to leave the matter to the Muslims themselves, being confident that the Muslims would give up cow

sacrifice of their own accord out of consideration for the feelings of their Hindu brethren. He said mutual regard and love rather than force should be the basis of the communities' approach to each other.

Gandhiji toured the country extensively with the Ali brothers preaching communal unity. Accompanied by Maulana Azad and Maulana Mohammed Ali, he toured Bihar also. They went to Shahabad, Gaya and Patna districts where trouble was feared. It was a crowded programme, involving long journeys by car. The Muslim leaders advised their co-religionists to refrain from doing anything which would wound the feelings of their Hindu brethren. They said that Muslims need not give up their right to sacrifice the cow, but in the interest of communal unity they could decide not to exercise that right. Hakim Ajmal Khan and other leaders also carried on an intensive propaganda in this behalf.

Consequently, the Id passed off peacefully. Cow sacrifice was made at fewer places than in the previous year. Force was not used at all and the occasion was marked by a display of mutual trust and cordiality not seen before.

In Bihar, especially in north Bihar, spinning had been on the decline. The Congress Khadi movement set the spinning wheel working again. Money was allocated for this out of the Tilak Swarajya Fund. Though without experience, we worked with energy and succeeded in popularising Khadi. But, lacking in managerial experience, we incurred losses.

At the beginning of the non-co-operation movement, Gandhiji gave another example of his foresight. He said spinning should be introduced in schools which should start imparting technical knowledge of the spinning wheel. This, he said, would provide thousands of young men with work. He opened an industrial emporium in the Sabarmati Ashram where research in spinning and Khadi was conducted. The men controlling national education, however, could not appreciate his argument and did not give importance to spinning in national schools though it was declared a compulsory subject.*

* Gandhiji's foresight, however, can be gauged by the recommendations of the Karve Committee, recently accepted by the Government of India, outlining an Amber Charkha programme which would give employment to millions.

Those who taught the art of working the spinning wheel had no expert knowledge of it and it was a case of the blind leading the blind. The students learnt the technique defectively. There was a lot of opposition, particularly in Maharashtra, to the cult of the spinning wheel. Despite all this, Khadi struck a responsive chord in people's minds and the demand for Khadi shot up. People, unable to distinguish between genuine and spurious Khadi, bought anything coarse and rough. Gandhiji had repeatedly stated that the propagation of Khadi was an essential condition of satyagraha and it looked as if the people were trying to fulfil that condition.

In his tour of Bihar, Gandhiji had laid great emphasis on Khadi. He visited Bihar Sharif, the centre of the Momins, Muslim weavers, who promised to give a helping hand to the Congress in the Khadi work.

After his tour, Gandhiji, with his companions, came to Patna and stayed at the Sadaqat Ashram where the newly-formed Congress Working Committee was in session. As a member of the Committee, I also attended. The meeting emphasised that the foreign cloth boycott programme should be fully implemented and that in order to obtain success in it, propagation of Khadi was essential.

I started touring Bihar spreading the message of the spinning wheel. To promote the cause of Khadi, the Provincial Congress Committee had set up a separate committee on which representatives from the districts served. While the Khadi promotion work was thus in full swing, the Government was not idle either. The Congress had appealed to dealers in foreign cloth to give up that trade, to dispose of their stocks and to sell Indian-made cloth only. To counteract this, the Chief Secretary of Bihar, Sifton, sent out a circular directing district officers to advocate the use of foreign cloth and to explain to the people the utter economic necessity of importing cloth to prevent the prices of indigenous cloth rising. He also issued instructions that Congressmen should be arrested when necessary. The stern policy of the Government, however, did not slacken our determination and we continued to work as before.

After touring Bihar, Gandhiji went to Assam and from there to Calcutta where the Working Committee was to meet. I also went to Calcutta to attend the session.

30

Non-Violence and the Hindu-Muslim Question

From Calcutta Gandhiji went on a tour of Madras. It was some time during this tour that he announced his decision to wear only a loin cloth. Maulana Mohammed Ali, who was with him, was arrested at the Waltair railway station and, along with other leaders, among whom were Maulana Shaukat Ali, Dr. Kitchlu, Nissar Ahmed, Pir Ghulam Mujaddid and Bharati Krishna Tirtha Shankaracharya charged with preaching in favour of the *fatwa*. The *fatwa* was a statement issued by the Muslim divines in India calling on all Muslims, as a religious duty, not to co-operate with the Government. The case created a stir in the country because of the status of the persons involved and because of what Mohammed Ali said in court. All the accused were convicted and sentenced, except Shankaracharya.

This provoked the Congress Working Committee at its Bombay meeting to issue a directive to all Congressmen to repeat the *fatwa*, for which the leaders had been arrested, at meetings at all important centres throughout India. Accordingly, meetings were held throughout the country and the *fatwa* repeated by Hindus as well as Muslims. Taken completely by surprise, the Government did nothing. This proved that while something done by a limited number of people might be treated as an offence by the Government, that could no longer hold good when a large number of people did likewise. This was a new aspect of satyagraha which the country had learned.

During this time, the Provincial Political Conference met at Arrah under the presidentship of Maulana Mohammed Shafi. As I had to attend the Working Committee meeting in Bombay I could take part in it only for a day. At this as well as the Khilafat Conference which followed, a drive for collections to the Khilafat Fund was started. Many Hindus subscribed to the Fund.

It was when Gandhiji started on his tour of Madras that news came that the Moplas had revolted against the Government. Maulana Mohammed Ali wanted to go to Malabar but his arrest prevented him from doing so. Gandhiji was on his way to Malabar when he was stopped by the authorities. Had these leaders been allowed to go, the rebellion would not, perhaps, have taken the turn it did. Beginning with an attack on Government officials, the railway and courts, the revolt took an ugly communal turn. Hindus were attacked, killed and forcibly converted. Hindus all over the country were deeply stirred. There was tension in the air. In communal unity, the outcome of painstaking endeavours for months on end, a deep fissure appeared. The situation could still have been saved but, unfortunately, things were to take a turn for the worse.

Gandhiji thought that he did well in helping the cause of the Khilafat and the Muslims. Never for a moment did he regret what he did. He felt that if one of the two brothers living in the same house got into difficulties it was the duty of the other to go to his help, without any expectation of reward. Besides, I think, Gandhiji helped the Muslims with the interest of the country at heart, because he thought that Hindu-Muslim unity was essential for the progress of the country and he was sure that the Muslims would give up cow sacrifice.

But a section of the people felt that by helping the cause of Khilafat, which was a religious movement, Gandhiji had fanned the flames of religious bigotry and made the Muslims fanatical. As if to substantiate this theory, even as the Khilafat movement grew weaker, the cleavage between the two communities grew deeper and riots began to occur in different parts of the country. Some time later, when the Turks themselves abolished the Khilafat, the very roots of the movement were cut off and the consciousness created among the Muslims spread to the field of politics. They began to think in terms of political supremacy in India.

The Hindus of Malabar reacted with equal vigour. While the Muslims started their proselytising activities, the Hindus also organised their campaign of conversions. In course of time a wide gulf came to separate the two communities. The

British saw their chance and stepped in. By skilful manoeuvres they kept the fires of communal distrust burning.

This is the long and short of the story of communal discord. It should not, however, be understood that all these developments took place in 1921 itself. That year the seed of distrust was sown and it took root gradually. Many, perhaps, even did not notice it and even those who noticed hardly realised its importance. In spite of the Mopla rebellion, the wave of communal unity still swept the country, as was evidenced at the many public meetings where the *fatwa* was repeated and by the collective boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India.

The Hindu-Muslim question began to agitate our minds. I pondered long and deeply over it. The more I thought about it, the more I wondered at the inability of people to comprehend certain basic factors which were so clear for all to see and the more was I convinced that Gandhiji's appeal for mutual love and respect as well as a non-violent approach was the only lasting solution to the problem besetting us.

Muslims might have come to this country from outside and added to their numbers, but they are as much Indians as Hindus are and there is no other country for them. While, they may sympathise with Muslims living in other countries and on certain issues may side with Muslims of other lands, it cannot be denied that they will have to live and die in India, that they have to enjoy and suffer here. While the Hindu is cremated, the Muslim needs some space for himself even after death — a few feet of land for himself permanently. So Muslims belong to this country and are its citizens. When it is admitted they are not foreigners, it follows that they have the same rights and privileges in the country as other communities and they should have a share in everything along with others. Their political rights cannot be ignored as the denial of this fact will only mean that we want to deprive them of their just rights and to suppress them.

Of course, what I have said applies to other religions and communities too. In a country where the people profess so many religions and speak so many tongues, peace and mutual regard can never prevail without unity. Otherwise one of the communities will suppress and subjugate the others. The

suppressed will ever continue to strive to rise. They will neither remain at peace nor let others be peaceful. The clash of interests might lead to civil war and if that occurred it would be no tribute to our wisdom and foresight. It would be a matter for shame and sorrow and we would be exposed to ridicule if even after seeing the great carnage of the World War, we did not learn a lesson. At the very beginning of the movement, Gandhiji had laid great stress on non-violence which a country like India needed most.

While it is very difficult to apply *ahimsa* in life, only those who do not appreciate its strength ridicule it. People say that *ahimsa* makes cowards of men and that no country can defend its freedom with *ahimsa*. They point out that no country has so far accepted it as a national policy. Let alone the common people, when even the wise and the disciplined cannot control their anger, which is after all the cause of violence, how can *ahimsa* be practicable—so they argue.

It is not usually remembered that it is in violence that cowardice lies and not in non-violence. If one is afraid of one's adversary and desists from harming him, that is not non-violence. One who desists out of fear would unhesitatingly attack his adversary if he gets the latter at a disadvantage or if he gets help from outside. Only he can be called non-violent who, be he strong or weak, desists from causing hurt to others because of his belief that it is wrong to hurt others. This belief, obviously, is not related to his capacity for doing harm. Even if he is not in a position to cause injury to his adversary but does not injure, not out of fear or a realisation of his weakness, but out of a conviction that it is wrong to injure, his action may still be non-violent. Much more so if he has strength and refrains because of his faith. As a natural corollary, the believer in non-violence must also have the capacity to bear suffering inflicted on him by his adversary. If he puts up with an injustice because of the belief that otherwise his adversary would cause him greater suffering, then his act is cowardly, not non-violent.

Non-violence lies in doing what one considers right and just and in doing one's duty fearlessly, regardless of the consequences and of the suffering which the adversary may inflict on one. The non-violent man will always remain steadfast

without deflecting from the path of duty. He would not use force even in excitement. But such behaviour is possible only when one is convinced of the justice of one's cause. Ultimately, it is the non-violent man who wins.

To those who may doubt the possibility of creating this kind of courage and capacity to bear suffering in men, particularly among common people, I would say this: even ordinary men who are not capable of displaying fortitude, courage and bravery in day-to-day life perform in the field of battle unheard of feats of bravery and gallantry. Just as practice and concentrated effort have imparted courage to the fighter in the field, so also practice and concentrated effort can produce a truly non-violent " warrior ". Only, the courage of the fighter may also be born of fear: fear of army discipline, fear of death at the hands of the enemy. The soldier may find himself in a position no better than that of Mareech in the *Ramayan*, of whom Tulsidas said: " He cast his eyes on both sides and found death awaiting him." On such occasions, bravery is instinctive. But training and discipline are always good aids and induce the brave man to be courageous and heroic.

The idea is not contradictory. The courage of the Satyagrahi is born of conviction. There is no element of fear in it. It is a higher and nobler type of courage and can be cultivated through training and discipline.

While in the army, daily parades and exercises constitute the practice, the basis of non-violent practice is, in one word, self-control. This control is gained by strictly following the rules of conduct enjoined on one by all the religions and by restraining the senses. Gandhiji has said that unshakable faith in God is of great help in producing a non-violent " warrior ". If developed from childhood, fearlessness and other attendant qualities of non-violence can easily be inculcated in a person.

There was a time when every country had a separate class of professional warriors. In India, fighting was the prerogative of the Kshatriyas. The British Government also had classified certain castes as martial and used to recruit soldiers only from those castes. But the total war of the modern day put an end to all that. Anybody could fight if he was given proper training. In India, too, the old restrictions were relaxed during

the last war and people were recruited from communities which were hitherto considered non-martial. But an army of non-violent men can be raised on a still wider basis of recruitment. There is no room in the ordinary army for the old, or for most of the women and children. But in the non-violent army, there is room for everyone, even for the blind and the physically handicapped. This is because the desideratum is not physical prowess but mental strength and spiritual force.

The peculiarity of non-violent struggle is that the non-violent "warrior" invites suffering on himself instead of inflicting it on his adversary. His object is not to attain his end by harming the adversary but by rousing sympathetic regard in the adversary through his own love and suffering. Whereas in violent struggle, both sides are faced with suffering, in non-violent struggle, only one side takes all the suffering on itself. The suffering is thus straightway halved; in fact, it is even much less because with a person who is determined not to use force, the hands of the adversary grow weak and his weapons get blunted. It is anger which gives strength to one's arms, and anger is easily born as a reaction to violent rather than to non-violent behaviour. Total suffering, therefore, is much less in the case of non-violence.

While in modern warfare we hear of newer weapons being invented with every passing day, no material weapons are needed for non-violent action. During the last war hundreds of millions were spent per day, and there was no end to calamities and suffering. It is impossible to have an accurate estimate of the total suffering caused to each country during the war. In non-violent action, there is no dislocation of everyday life, monetary expense is much less and casualties are much lower. Thus even a poor country can afford to resort to non-violent resistance against the most powerful of nations.

So far I have spoken about the importance of non-violence in international affairs. Turning to internal affairs, if violence is resorted to in a country inhabited by people of different religions, languages and views, that country will not find peace even for one day. In India, if various sections of the people do not show cordiality and tolerance towards each

other and stress only each one's rights and concentrate on those rights being accepted by the others, forgetting each one's duties to the others, it can result only in tension and bloodshed. In individuals, the tendency to violence can be curbed by the police and the administration, but when violence spreads to a whole people living in various parts of the country, the administration breaks down. Such clashes would only result in civil war. There is, therefore, no way out for countries like India but to have faith in non-violence.

There is one point worth remembering. When we say we cannot expect a common man to behave non-violently in the face of incitement, we are apt to forget that, in the daily life of an individual or a group, we see that, except in a few cases, man is generally inclined to be non-violent. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, man carries on peacefully — in non-violence. Is it not possible then to carry on in the remaining one case also without resort to violence? We have to make a special effort to achieve this, because till we do so we can hardly claim to be better than beasts.

The terrible and destructive Second World War has set the people thinking. They realise now that, if periodic carnage and large-scale destruction are to be avoided, and humanity and civilisation saved, man will have to think hard to find a way out so that children are not brought up only to be killed and wealth is not produced only to be destroyed. I am sorry to see that many of my countrymen, even Congress workers, who have been maintaining non-violence throughout in their service to the country, are now losing faith in the sacred creed of non-violence.

Many can be callous enough to say that Hindu-Muslim unity should have physical force as its basis and not mutual goodwill. That means they think one of the two communities should be suppressed by force. Some Muslims think that they kept the whole of India under subjugation for centuries when their number was much smaller and that they can do the same thing again. On the other hand, there are Hindus who say that the days when the Muslims dominated are gone for ever. At that time the Hindus were not wide awake but now they are not only in a majority but are more educated, wealthier and more powerful. The country, they say, belongs to the

Hindus; others are unimportant minorities who should be content with fair treatment.

Both the schools of thought rely only on physical force. They turn their backs on non-violence which alone can solve the tangle. Violence breeds only violence. If we think that the Hindu-Muslim question can be solved by violence, it will only mean more violence and the ultimate destruction of both communities. Only a policy of live and let live, mutual goodwill and respect, and non-violent behaviour can solve the problem and usher in an era of Hindu-Muslim unity.

We should have faith in truth and justice and adopt the creed of non-violence for ever. It is possible that such a policy may not bring quick results or its success may not be visible at all places. But if our actions are based on self-confidence, truth and genuine courage and not fear or cowardice, our success is absolutely certain.

31
Flood Havoc in Chapra

In the month of Aswin (July-August) in 1921, the district of Chapra had a torrential downpour. In one day, 36 inches of rain fell which flooded the whole district. In Chapra town the people had to face untold hardships. The complete callousness towards, and disregard of, the people's sufferings displayed by the Government officials enraged the people. When the people were waging a life and death struggle against the rising waters, the officials, with contemptuous indifference, held regattas in the flooded areas. They looked on with unconcern at the distress of the people. The plight of the marooned women and children did not move them. Except for an English District Judge and a Bengali Sub-Judge, not a single official raised a finger to help the stricken. At a public meeting in Chapra, the attitude of the officials was condemned and the efforts of Mahendra Prasad, my brother, and the Congress workers who had strained themselves to the utmost to help the distressed people were mentioned with gratitude.

The situation was no better in the countryside. At one place, the people made repeated representations to the Collector to breach the railway line embankment connecting Chapra and Mashrak, because it prevented the water from flowing over to the other side, but he turned them down. Soon afterwards, the line was washed away by the rising waters. Similarly, at another place, near Siwan, the water was rising on one side of the raised railway track and the villagers wanted to breach the line to make a passage for the water, but the police would have none of it. Getting desperate, the villagers took up shovels and swam towards the track, ignoring the police. When the policemen, standing near the railway line, threatened to shoot them, the villagers retorted, " It is death for us either way, at your hands or in the floods. Do your worst, " and began cutting the embankment. The policemen lost their nerve and looked on silently. The line was breached and the water flowed to the other side of the embankment. Many villages were saved. The police later reported that the line

had been breached by the floods! A bridge marks the spot today, and there is no longer any danger of a flood in this area.

In Darauli, a high-level road was a barrier against the rising waters. The villagers flocked to the police station and requested the Sub-Inspector to cut the road and save many villages in the low-lying area from complete destruction. The Sub-Inspector derisively asked them why they did not go to their "Swaraji Daroga" instead of approaching him. (The office-bearers of the village Congress committees had come to be known as the "Swaraji Daroga".) The villagers in desperation turned to the Thana Congress Secretary to whom they reported what the Sub-Inspector had told them. The Secretary said that in that case his advice was that they should go ahead and breach the road to ensure their safety. The villagers promptly acted on his advice and saved many villages from what would otherwise have been certain disaster.

As soon as I could manage, I rushed to Chapra to organise relief work. When I reached the town, the water had receded but food grains had been destroyed. So we started collecting funds and feeding the people and rehabilitating the stricken. Gujeratis were, as ever, liberal with their help. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj was always quick to respond to calls for monetary assistance. Malaria broke out after the floods had subsided. We collected the local doctors who prepared a specific which, besides curing malaria, constituted also a remedy for coughs and stomach troubles. We had this drug prepared in large quantities, bottled it and distributed it to the people. It had an immediate effect and the epidemic was instantly checked.

This was not the first time that I had done flood relief work. Apart from the work I did in 1914 during the Bihar deluge when I was studying in Calcutta, whenever Bihar was visited by floods, I always hastened to organize relief. Wherever we went for flood relief work, the same tragic scenes awaited us. Mud houses collapsed or collapsing; food grains in a state of decomposition; many dead cattle floating about and the rest, starved and famished, looking mutely at you; the hungry dogs perched on the debris of houses moaning incessantly; and the villagers, having hardly anything to eat, looking listless. When flood waters receded, epidemics took their place.

Later, when the Rabi crop sowing season came, there would be an all-round shortage of seed and a clamorous demand for it. It was no easy job moving about in the flood-affected areas. Rushing to the Shahabad district on the occasion of the 1923 Sone floods, I found the entire area between Koilwar and Arrah submerged. Even the railway embankment which is very high here had been breached at various places leaving gaps 150 to 200 feet wide. The rails, with the sleepers in some places, just hung without any support and down below was the rushing water with deep pools at places. Abdul Bari and myself crossed these yawning gaps, crawling over the rails like animals on all fours, or clinging to them like monkeys. Mostly we moved by boats.

From my experience of flood relief work for thirty years in Bihar, I would say that one of the main causes of the havoc is the high-level railway tracks and roads. The elevated embankments always check the flow of water from the flooded area to the other side. If a sufficient number of wide culverts are built the flood damage can be considerably reduced. But the railway companies were always against building them. The old B. N. W. Railway did construct culverts in some places, but they were not at the behest of the people but only out of commercial considerations. They paid no heed to the people until floods caused breaches in the track and the traffic was suspended. Provision of culverts is, therefore, an important matter to be attended to if frequent flood havoc is to be averted.

32
Preparations for Satyagraha

THE non-co-operation movement was in full swing. The Government and its minions were busy preparing for the visit of the Prince of Wales and they feared that a clash might occur between the Government and the non-co-operators.

The Congress Working Committee met in Bombay in the beginning of October and decided to hold the A.-I.C.C. session in Delhi in November. The A.-I.C.C. was to consider the question of starting the struggle. Before the meeting a difference of opinion cropped up between the President, T. Vijayaraghavachariar, and the Secretary, Pandit Motilal Nehru. The President announced the postponement of the A.-.I.C.C. session and the Secretary countermanded his circular stating that the President had no authority to override the Working Committee decision and that since the meeting had been called to consider a very important decision, it could not be postponed. Mahatma Gandhi supported Motilal Nehru, and the A.-I.C.C. met in Delhi as scheduled. Vijayaraghavachariar stayed away from the session and Lala Lajpat Rai took the chair. Having fallen ill at Chapra, I could not attend the session.

Congressmen assembled in Bombay had already started individual satyagraha by publishing the *fatwa* which had been banned by the Government. Many read it out at public meetings. The Working Committee authorised Congressmen to defy the official restrictions with regard to the boycott of foreign cloth and the propagation of Khadi.

The A.-I.C.C. decided that the Provincial Congress Committees, at their discretion, could allow people individually to offer satyagraha, which included non-payment of taxes. Only such provinces or areas as had taken to the use of Khadi, were boycotting foreign cloth, were trying to remove untouchability and were furthering national education were to be permitted to offer satyagraha. For individuals, the conditions were habitual wearing of Khadi, faith in Hindu-Muslim unity and active work for the eradication of untouchability. Above

all, firm faith in non-violence was a prime necessity. Any act leading to disturbances of any kind was strictly to be avoided. The Working Committee alone had the power to relax any of these conditions. It made it clear that it would not undertake the responsibility of supporting any satyagrahi's family.

The conditions were so stiff that few individuals or regions could fulfil them. The High Command took it for granted that the movement would not be launched anywhere in a hurry without proper preparations. All provinces, in fact, were asked to await the lead of Gujerat.

Bihar began preparing for satyagraha. The people of Chapra district wanted permission to start satyagraha in Basantpur thana since, they said, they fulfilled all the conditions and had already prepared themselves for the movement. The Provincial Congress Committee sent Maulvi Mohammed Shafi and a few others to inquire into this claim and they found it justified.

Then the Prince of Wales arrived in Bombay. The Government went all out in arranging the reception while the people were equally set in their intention to boycott the visit. There was almost complete unanimity among the communities and the boycott was a great success, though a few Parsis took part in the official functions. This led to a clash between some Parsis who were returning from a reception and some Congressmen, mostly Muslims, and developed into a major disturbance. Gandhiji sent Sarojini Naidu, Seth Umar Sobhani, Seth Chotani, Shankar Lal Banker and others to pacify the people. Later he himself went to Bombay and undertook a fast in expiation of the sins of those who had started the trouble. It had a sobering effect and the rioting subsided. Fifty to sixty people lost their lives and more than 300 sustained injuries, more than three-fourths of the casualties being Congressmen.

This disturbance had a profound effect on the Mahatma. When the Working Committee met in Bombay, he emphasised the fact that the people were not yet prepared mentally for satyagraha and it would be dangerous to launch the movement at all places. He was of the view that the people did not fully understand the technique of the non-violent movement. The High Command, therefore, thought that a volunteer force was essential in all provinces to maintain peace and control the crowds at public meetings. Accordingly, the Provincial

Congress Committees were directed to organise Sevak Dals, every member of which was required to swear adherence to non-violence in thought, word and deed and to accept the discipline of the Congress. By this step, the Congress hoped to avert a repetition of the Bombay incident elsewhere. Gandhiji's fast, however, had a salutary effect on all communities in Bombay, for not only normal conditions were soon restored but the communities took a pledge to live in peace and amity thenceforward.

Annie Besant, who was from the outset opposed to satyagraha, wrote articles after the Bombay incident attacking Gandhiji and the movement. She said that Gandhiji represented the forces of darkness. She pointed out while referring to a certain incident that the Government could meet stones and brickbats only with bullets. An article to this effect appeared when the Working Committee was in session in Bombay. I remember C. R. Das bringing a copy of the paper containing the article to Gandhiji and expressing the hope that he would give a trenchant reply in *Young India*. Gandhiji replied that he need not entertain any such hopes. It was not in Gandhiji's nature to join issues like that. In fact, he did not even read such articles and was able to keep his own writings free from bitterness. He could express the strongest opinion in the most moderate language.

It is entirely owing to his influence that I too was able to develop the ability to avoid bitterness and conflict in whatever I spoke or wrote.

33
Arrests and Efforts at Compromise

THE Bombay incident was the signal for the Government to unleash repression. Within a few days (December 1921), many Congressmen, particularly the leaders, were arrested all over the country. The main reason for the arrests, the Government announced, was the Congress Sevak Dal which was now declared an unlawful organisation.

From the limbo of the old statute book the Government resuscitated two old acts to facilitate its repressive drive. They were the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act which was brought into being to curb the revolutionaries in Bengal and the Seditious Meetings Act which was enforced to control and suppress subversive organisations. These laws were now utilised to declare unlawful the Congress Sevak Dals throughout the country and to ban public meetings. Any participation in the activities of the Congress and Khilafat Sevak Dals became a crime.

The Congress decided not to bow before these laws of repression. All Congress committees persisted in the work of organising the Sevak Dals with great vigour. The Government put under arrest anyone participating in these Dals. The Khilafat and the freedom demand receded to the background and the question whether we could have the right to organise public opinion in the country and work in co-operation with one another came to the fore. Even this right had now been taken away by the new measures of the Government. To resist these laws became the foremost duty of the Congress. Gandhiji stated that it was no more the intention of the Congress to launch satyagraha as announced earlier but to agitate only for the right of freedom of speech and of organisation. This right, he said, belonged not only to Congressmen but to all parties. The Government paid no heed to him.

The Ali brothers had already been arrested. Now Deshbandhu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai, Maulana Azad, C. Rajagopalachari and several others were also arrested. But the popular agitation to boycott

the visit of the Prince of Wales did not relax a bit. So, when the Prince was about to visit Calcutta, Lord Reading began to be worried. He initiated efforts for a compromise so that the Prince could have a popular reception at least in the second biggest city of the British Empire. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was then the Law Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council, but it was Pandit Malaviya who was primarily behind the compromise move. He went to Calcutta and met the Governor of Bengal, Lord Ronaldshey. He met Deshbandhu Das and other leaders in jail. A deputation to the Viceroy was contemplated. Pandit Malaviya had some hopes of success.

Meanwhile, the Government began large-scale arrests in Bihar also. While the Provincial Congress Committee was in session in Chapra, the police swooped on its office and made a search of the premises. Later when we were taking part in a public meeting, the police hovered about the place and seemed to be preparing to arrest the leaders. Someone in the crowd even stood up and, pointing to the police, chanted a couplet from Tulsidas's *Ramayan*, which says: "The son of Gadhi (Vishwamitra) is worried as to when these demons would leave the country." But nothing happened, the police made no move and the people dispersed peacefully. Very soon, however, the police launched mass arrests and searches of the Congress committee offices. In Patna, Maulvi Khurshed Hasnain, Jagat Narain Lal and Krishna Prakash Sen Singh were arrested. Elsewhere Maulvi Mohammed Shafi, Shrikrishna Singh, Vindheshwari Prasad Varma, Ram Narain Singh and others were taken to jail.

Just then I arrived in Patna. Braj Kishore Prasad, Mazharul Haq, a few others and I issued a statement in which we encouraged the people to enrol in the Sevak Dal, condemned the repressive policy of the Government and declared ourselves to be members of the Sevak Dal. But we were not arrested. Many sent long lists of names to the District Magistrates, claiming to be members of the Sevak Dal. This too did not result in arrests. It was then we heard of the compromise efforts. Mass arrests seemed to have been stopped.

Lord Sinha resigned the governorship of Bihar and Mr. le Mesurier succeeded him. Some members of the Legislative

Council, including Hasan Imam and Dwarka Nath, waited in a deputation on the Governor to tell him that peace prevailed in the province and that it was only the Government's decision to ban the Sevak Dal which was endangering peace. They asked the Government to revise its policy. The Governor's reply constituted an admission that the Government's entire policy was based on wrong premises. We issued a statement clarifying our stand but, before it appeared, orders had gone forth to stop arrests. But the ban on Sevak Dals was not lifted.

This seemed to confirm the reports that a compromise was in the offing. We heard that the compromise talks in Calcutta jail were successful and that Deshbandhu Das had accepted the conditions laid down by the Government. But Gandhiji, who was consulted, laid down his own conditions.

The Government's terms were that the Congress should withdraw the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales while the Government would convene a conference at which all pending problems would be discussed and would release all prisoners except those convicted in the Karachi case and that meant the exclusion of the Ali brothers.

Gandhiji wanted the date and the exact terms of reference of the proposed conference to be settled beforehand and stipulated that the Karachi case prisoners should also be released. Given another two or three days, an acceptable formula would have been devised but the day of the visit of the Prince to Calcutta drew near and the Government, which had set afoot compromise talks only to assure a fitting welcome to the Prince in Calcutta, thought that as its aim did not seem to have any chance of success there was no point in continuing the talks. It reverted to its policy of repression. The deputation that waited on the Government returned empty-handed, but the Government spokesmen tactfully threw the hint that the peace efforts need not be abandoned. So some people, including Malaviya, got the impression that though the talks had broken down for the time being, the Government would welcome efforts to bring about a round table conference.

Deshbandhu Das was rather sore that Gandhiji had lost an opportunity to come to terms with the Government. He argued that whatever little the Government had offered

was a gain to the Congress and, by accepting the offer, the Congress would have increased its prestige and made rapid strides towards its objective, despite the Government's subsequent bids to suppress it. Mahatma Gandhi, on the other hand, pointed out that all that Lord Reading wanted was a popular welcome in Calcutta to the Prince of Wales so that the Bombay incident could be forgotten and the Government would be able to proclaim the loyalty of the people of India. He said the date and the terms of reference of the proposed conference were vague and there was no knowing if it would meet at all once the Calcutta visit of the Prince was over. He did not want the people later to say that the Congress had been duped by the Government. Any hurried acceptance of the Government offer would contribute to the waning of rather than increase in the influence of the Congress. Further, he would not, Gandhiji said, be a party to the abandonment behind prison bars of comrades like the Ali brothers "who had been with us through thick and thin."

Deshbandhu Das was, however, not convinced and when he was released he said, at a public meeting in Calcutta, that Gandhiji had blundered. It is for future historians to see those events with detachment and give their verdict on them. I can only say that our experience of negotiations with the British Government was always rather bitter. We often got lost in verbiage. The English language is so elastic that the Government's statements were open to limitless interpretations. Mahatma Gandhi knew from experience that it would be fatal to leave any loophole or the least element of uncertainty in the terms of an agreement. He had no faith in the sincerity of purpose of the British Government. Hence he refused to barter the settled policy of the Congress and the freedom of his comrades in prison for any vague Government offers.

34

The Ahmedabad Congress and Satyagraha

THE date of the annual session of the Congress to be held in Ahmedabad drew near and Deshbandhu Das was elected President and Sardar Patel the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Elaborate preparations were made for the session which marked a departure from the previous sessions as the use of chairs was discontinued and arrangements were made for the delegates to sit on the floor. It was thus possible to accommodate more delegates and visitors in a limited space. Delegates had been elected in accordance with the new rules framed in Nagpur and the Congress could now be said to be an organisation of elected representatives.

Several people were behind bars, including the President-elect, but there was no sign of depression anywhere. There was only unbounded enthusiasm in which even Gandhiji shared. The people expected that at last the Congress would start the civil disobedience movement.

Alongside the Congress pandal, a big exhibition was organised with Khadi as an important exhibit. Near the residential pandal of the delegates had sprung up a small colony called Khadinagar. All this was new to the Congress. Near the main pandal, another pandal had been erected for the Khilafat Conference.

The session itself left the beaten track. The Chairman of the Reception Committee made the briefest speech in Congress history. Besides welcoming the delegates, he only presented a brief report of the work done in Gujerat. In the absence of the President-elect, Hakim Ajmal Khan was voted to the chair. The President and the Chairman of the Reception Committee made their speeches in Urdu and Hindi respectively.

The main item on the agenda was satyagraha. The only resolution adopted was the one calling for the launching of satyagraha, and appointing Gandhiji as " dictator " to conduct the campaign. In case he was arrested, as was held very likely, Gandhiji was authorised to name his successor. In

case of peace talks with the Government, the "dictator" could proceed to negotiate in consultation with the Congress. But it was laid down that no "dictator" would be empowered to alter the objective of the Congress. The session laid emphasis on the organisation of Sevak Dals and the pledge which intending satyagrahis were to sign was made stiffer.

Maulana Hasrat Mohani moved a resolution urging the Congress to change its goal of dominion status to complete independence. Gandhiji opposed this resolution and it was rejected. This resolution continued to be moved in the subsequent sessions and rejected on account of Gandhiji's opposition until it was finally adopted with his support. Pandit Malaviya advised the Congress, in a resolution, to accept the Government's invitation to a round table conference. The proposal was out of tune with the atmosphere prevailing at the session and it was rejected. Pandit Motilal was also opposed to all compromise moves at that stage.

Congressmen were advised to prepare the people in their respective regions for the struggle. They were advised to make special efforts for the organisation of the Sevak Dals. Before leaving Ahmedabad the delegates came to know that Gandhiji had chosen Bardoli for launching the satyagraha campaign.

Undaunted by his defeat at Ahmedabad, Pandit Malaviya, along with some other leaders holding like views, convened a conference in Bombay with a view to effecting a compromise between the Congress and the Government. A number of prominent men including Congressmen and Khilafat supporters were invited. Sir Sankaran Nair was asked to preside. I also responded to the invitation. Gandhiji was made our sole spokesman. He very plainly stated that the Congress had no faith in the round table conference. He said he would participate in it in his individual capacity if he was invited, but if the Congress was called he would be able to participate in it only if the date and agenda of the conference were decided beforehand. He demanded the rescinding of the ban on the Sevak Dals and the release of all political prisoners. At that conference, the Congress would try to get the demands in respect of the Khilafat, the Punjab tragedy and swaraj accepted. These were his firm conditions, on which alone he was willing to postpone the satyagraha.

The convenors moved a resolution which Gandhiji could not support. A sub-committee was set up to study it and present it to the conference after necessary amendments. One of the speeches made at the conference left a deep impression on me. Sir Hormusji Wadia, a well-known businessman who subscribed to the Liberal ideology, although he was opposed to the satyagraha move, denounced the Government's repressive policy in strong language and laid the entire responsibility for the then situation at the door of the Government.

The sub-committee met the following day and Gandhiji attended it also. A resolution was drafted with which Sir Sankaran Nair could not reconcile himself and he kept away from the afternoon session of the sub-committee. Sir M. Visvesvaraya took the chair and accepted the resolution. Gandhiji reiterated his stand but promised to try to get the satyagraha postponed.

Almost all the members of the Congress Working Committee were present and they met and decided that the satyagraha be postponed till January 31. Even if the Government was unable to accept the Congress conditions about the round table conference, collective satyagraha was not to be offered till the Working Committee met again to decide the issue. Only individual satyagraha was allowed where it could not be avoided. The Working Committee, however, stated that the work of formation of Sevak Dals should continue.

The resolution adopted by the Bombay conference of liberal leaders was telegraphed to Lord Reading, informing him that the conditions put forward by the Viceroy to the deputation in Calcutta were acceptable to the Congress and, therefore, a round table conference could be called by the Government. The Viceroy immediately rejected the offer. An exchange of telegrams ensued till January 31, 1922, when the Congress thought that the time had come for the final decision.

At a public meeting in February at Bardoli, when Gandhiji and Hakim Ajmal Khan were present, it was decided to start satyagraha there. Vithalbhai Patel and Vallabhbhai Patel took up residence in Bardoli. Gandhiji, who joined them, explained to the people the significance of satyagraha and the suffering it involved. He made the people take an

oath that they would stick to truth and non-violence and make any sacrifice for the sake of the freedom of the country.

The Congress Working Committee next met at Surat and endorsed the decision of Gandhiji to start satyagraha in Bardoli. Gandhiji then wrote a letter to the Viceroy informing him of the decision to launch satyagraha and the date on which it was to be started.

35
Chauri Chaura and the Suspension of Satyagraha

ONE day while I was addressing a public meeting in the village of Pupri during my tour of Muzaffarpur district, I got a telegram which asked me to attend an emergency meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Bardoli. I cancelled my tour and took the first train for Patna *en route* to Bardoli.

Meanwhile, I read in the newspapers of the tragic incident in Chauri Chaura in the district of Gorakhpur in U.P. There had been a clash between the people and the police and the enraged crowd had set fire to the police station where a number of policemen were killed and burnt to death.

When I arrived at Bardoli, I met Pandit Malaviya at the railway station. He told me that the Working Committee had concluded its meetings and that the satyagraha had been suspended. He explained that it was at Gandhiji's request that the meeting had been convened at Bardoli to consider the grave happenings in Chauri Chaura. Gandhiji had been greatly agitated over the incident and was of the view that the people had not understood the utmost importance of non-violence. As long as they had not imbibed the significance of *ahimsa* it would be dangerous to go ahead with the satyagraha movement, for what happened in Chauri Chaura could happen in other places as well. The only consequence, he said, would be a still more repressive policy by the Government. Apart from any Government reaction, Gandhiji had no belief in a freedom obtained through a violent struggle. He, therefore, wanted to suspend the satyagraha. The Working Committee had endorsed his view.

This decision shocked me and I hastened to Ganhiji's residence. He asked me if I had heard of the Working Committee's decision. When I nodded he enquired about my reactions. While I was preparing to reply, thinking that he had detected a dubious look on my face, Gandhiji explained the position to me and, after a short pause, said, "Now give thought to what I have said." I revolved the problem in my

mind in the light of all that Gandhiji had said and I felt that Gandhiji's attitude was correct. I told him so the next day. Gandhiji observed a five-day purificatory fast and then at a public meeting announced the decision of the Working Committee.

Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Ansari, who had not been able to attend the Bardoli meeting, sent in their endorsement of the Working Committee's decision. The decision, however, shocked many people. Let alone ordinary Congress workers, leaders like Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and others who were in jail were greatly disappointed. A wave of despondency swept the country.

It was in Bardoli that Gandhiji enunciated the plan of constructive work which has ever since remained in the forefront of the Congress programme. The resolution of the Working Committee on this point is so important that I think it is necessary to reproduce it in full here. It said:

" Whereas the Gorakhpur tragedy is a powerful proof of the fact that the mass mind has not yet fully realised the necessity of non-violence as an integral, active and chief part of mass civil disobedience, whereas the reported indiscriminate acceptance of persons as volunteers in contravention of the Congress instructions betrays want of appreciation of the vital part of Satyagraha and whereas, in the opinion of the Working Committee, the delay in the attainment of the national aim is solely due to the weak and incomplete execution in practice of the constitution of the Congress and with a view to perfecting the internal organisation, the Working Committee advises all Congress organisations to be engaged in the following activities:

" 1) To enlist at least one crore of members of the Congress.

" *Note* (*i*): Since peaceful and legitimate means are the essence of the Congress creed, no person should be enlisted who does not believe in such means as indispensable for the attainment of Swaraj. The creed of the Congress must, therefore, be carefully explained to each person who is asked to join the Congress.

" *Note* (*ii*): Workers should note that no one who does not pay the annual subscription can be regarded as a qualified Congressman; all the old members are, therefore, to be advised to re-register their names.

" 2) To popularise the spinning wheel and to organise the manufacture of hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar and popularise its use by house-to-house visits.

" *Note*: To this end all workers and office-bearers should wear khaddar and it is recommended that, with a view to encouraging others, they should themselves learn hand-spinning.

" 3) To organise national schools.

" *Note*: No picketing of Government schools should be resorted to, but reliance should be placed upon the superiority of national schools in all vital matters to draw students from Government and aided schools.

" 4) To organise the depressed classes for a better life, to improve their social, mental and moral condition, to induce them to send their children to national schools and to provide for them the ordinary facilities which the other citizens enjoy.

" *Note*: Whilst therefore, where the prejudice against the untouchables is still strong in places, separate schools and separate wells must be maintained out of Congress funds, every effort should be made to draw their children to national schools and to persuade the people to allow the untouchables to use the common wells.

" 5) To organise the temperance campaign amongst the people addicted to the drink habit by house-to-house visits and to rely more upon appeal to the drinker in his home than upon picketing.

" 6) To organise village and town panchayats for the private settlement of all disputes, reliance being placed solely upon the force of public opinion and the truthfulness of panchayat decisions to ensure obedience to them.

" *Note*: In order to avoid even the appearance of coercion, no social boycott should be resorted to against those who will not obey panchayat's decisions.

" 7) In order to promote and emphasise unity among all classes and races and mutual goodwill, the establishment of which is the aim of the movement of non-co-operation, to organise a social service department that will render help to all, irrespective of differences in times of illness or accident.

" *Note*: A non-co-operator, whilst firmly adhering to his creed, will deem it a privilege to render personal service in

case of illness or accident to every person whether English or Indian.

"8) To continue the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund and to call upon every Congressman or Congress sympathiser to pay at least one-hundredth part of his annual income for the year 1921, every province to send every month 25 per cent of its income from the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund to the All-India Congress Committee.

"The above resolutions shall be brought before the forthcoming session of the All-India Congress Committee for revision, if necessary."

The A.-I.C.C. meeting which was to discuss the Bardoli decision was to be held in Delhi. When the date was fixed for the meeting, the almanac had not been consulted, and the appointed day turned out to be the day of the Shivaratri festival, which is generally observed as a day of fasting by Hindus. Telegrams began to pour in suggesting some other day for the meeting. Gandhiji would not agree to change the date. When I pointed out to him that Hindus considered it an important festival and said that it would be advisable to change the date, Gandhiji made his characteristic reply: "There is nothing incompatible between fasting and holding a meeting. Those who fast can take part in the meeting as well unless it is prohibited to do a good deed on a day of fast. This is an important national service. Nothing can be more appropriate than that the Hindus should take part in the meeting in a spirit sanctified by religious belief." He would not alter the date.

Before the A.-I.C.C. deliberations opened, the Working Committee met in Delhi and it had to discuss the many turbulent reactions to its Bardoli stand which came from all over the country. The notes from Lala Lajpat Rai and Motilal said: "This decision is greatly harmful to the country. It will not only demoralise the people but also mean a setback to the prestige of the nation." The letters from other leaders were also in the same vein. It appeared as if all these leaders were out to challenge the very leadership of Gandhiji. But Gandhiji was unmoved. He said that those who were in jail were not in a position to know what was happening outside and had no right to tender advice and that we need not give

much weight to what they said. Once he took a decision, Gandhiji stuck to it steadfastly, however bitter the opposition.

At the A.-I.C.C. session, Gandhiji moved the Bardoli resolution for ratification. Dr. B. S. Moonje moved an amendment calling for a committee to be set up to review the situation regarding the civil disobedience movement and give the correct lead to the country. The amendment and the speeches made in support of it took the form of a no-confidence motion against Gandhiji. Unfortunately, the Congress President, Hakim Ajmal Khan, was suddenly taken ill, and he left the meeting, nominating Gandhiji to the chair. Many of us felt that it was not right that the very person who was the subject of discussion and against whom a no-confidence motion had been moved should conduct the proceedings. But nothing daunted, Gandhiji took the chair and did his duty without the least hesitation and with great equanimity.

When someone rose to speak, he would ask if he was supporting or opposing the amendment. If he wanted to speak against, Gandhiji would ask him to wait, but if he wanted to speak in favour of the amendment, Gandhiji would let him speak. Many speeches were thus made in support of Dr. Moonje's amendment, and Gandhiji allowed none to be made in favour of his own resolution. Some of us were apprehensive and puzzled at this, but when, eventually the resolution was put to the vote, it turned out that only those who spoke for Dr. Moonje voted for him. Dr. Moonje's amendment was defeated and the Bardoli resolution was carried.

The resolution said: " The All-India Congress Committee having carefully considered the resolutions passed by the Working Committee at its meeting held at Bardoli on the 11th and 12th February, 1922 confirms the said resolutions noted therein and further resolves that individual civil disobedience, whether of a defensive or aggressive character, may be commenced in respect of particular places or particular laws at the instance of, and upon permission being granted therefor, by the respective provincial committee; provided that such civil disobedience shall not be permitted unless all the conditions laid down by the Congress or the All-India Congress Committee or the Working Committee are strictly fulfilled.

" Reports having been received from various quarters that picketing of foreign cloth shops is as necessary as picketing of liquor shops, the All-India Congress Committee authorises such picketing of a bona fide character and wishes it to be understood that the resolutions of the Working Committee do not mean any abandonment of the original Congress programme of non-co-operation or permanent abandonment of mass civil disobedience, but considers that an atmosphere of necessary mass non-violence can be established by the workers concentrating upon the constructive programme framed by the Working Committee at Bardoli.

" The All-India Congress Committee holds civil disobedience to be the right and the duty of the people to be exercised and performed, whenever the State opposes the declared will of the people.

" *Note*: Individual civil disobedience is disobedience of orders or laws by a single individual or of an ascertained number or group of individuals. Therefore, a prohibited public meeting where admission is regulated by tickets and to which no unauthorised admission is allowed, is an instance of individual civil disobedience, whereas a prohibited meeting to which the general public is admitted without any restriction is an instance of mass civil disobedience. Such civil disobedience is defensive when a prohibited public meeting is held for conducting a normal activity, although it may result in arrest. It would be aggressive if it is held not for any normal activity, but merely for the purpose of courting arrest and imprisonment."

K. C. Ray, a journalist, whom I had known when I was in college in Calcutta, was then a correspondent of the Associated Press of India. I happened to meet him in Delhi. He took me aside and said that the Government had decided to be very stern with the Congress. It knew the Congress had become weak because of its internal differences. He added that Gandhiji would be arrested before long. I thought he was merely airing his own views and never realised that what he said was based on authentic information.

We had hardly reached our destinations after leaving Delhi when the news came of Gandhiji's arrest and of his being taken to the Sabarmati jail. I left for Sabarmati immediately, to be in time for Gandhiji's trial in the Court of the Sessions Judge.

I can never forget the scene I witnessed at the trial. Gandhiji's statement was memorable for its frankness and courage. The charges were that he was responsible for seditious writings in *Young India*. Gandhiji not only pleaded guilty but also said that if and when he was set free, he would do the same thing and " play with fire ".

The Judge delivered a brief judgment. Never before had he had an opportunity, nor was he likely to have it in future, of trying such a celebrity as Gandhiji in his court. Gandhiji was held in the highest esteem by millions of his countrymen. But a judge has to act strictly according to law, and the law does not recognise any difference between man and man. He had, therefore, to sentence Gandhiji. With a touch of emotion, he said that though by his confession the accused had rendered the Judge's task easy, yet he was faced with a difficult problem in determining the sentence. Finally, the Judge said that Gandhiji was as great as Lokamanya Tilak and it would meet the ends of justice if Gandhiji was awarded the same sentence, namely, six years' jail, awarded to Tilak in similar circumstances.

Gandhiji thanked the Judge for classing him with Lokamanya Tilak. After the Judge left the court, we all went to Gandhiji to bid him goodbye. It was a very touching scene. I burst into tears and it was with great difficulty that I could control myself after a while and take leave of Gandhiji.

Shankar Lal Banker, who was also accused in the same case as the printer and publisher of *Young India*, was sentenced to a term of one year and was lucky enough to be sent to the same jail as Gandhiji.

36
Constructive Programme

WHILE going to prison, Gandhiji enjoined on all Congressmen to concentrate on the constructive programme which would constitute a preparation for satyagraha. With his imprisonment, popular enthusiasm, which had touched new heights in expectation of the launching of satyagraha, was replaced by despondency and indifference. Some stated bitterly that Gandhiji had ruined for ever the chances of a mass campaign and retarded the winning of freedom. Others thought there was no point in giving up satyagraha and yet boycotting the Legislative Councils. The supporters of Gandhiji, however, emphasised the importance of constructive work and began earnestly to popularise the programme. The seeds of disunity which were sown after the failure of the compromise talks in December 1921 with Lord Reading and which had sprouted at the time of the Bardoli decision now blossomed speedily.

The Maharashtra leaders were dissatisfied with the satyagraha programme from the very start. Although they had accepted the Congress decision because of the majority support, they never really put their heart into the campaign. They raised their voice of protest whenever they got an opportunity. They struck a discordant note at the A.-I.C.C. meeting in Bombay in July 1921, repeating their performance at the Ahmedabad Congress session. In Delhi, when the A.-I.C.C. was to endorse the Bardoli decision, Dr. Moonje tried to use that opportunity to get the whole Congress programme considered *de novo*. When these tactics failed, Dr. Moonje moved the same resolution at the Madhya Pradesh (Marathi) Provincial Congress Committee. An inquiry committee was set up and it presented a new programme. The Provincial Congress Committee decided to send that report to the A.-I.C.C. for consideration.

But the people of Madhya Pradesh were not at all satisfied with the new development. A big public meeting was held in Nagpur, under the presidentship of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, where despite the best efforts of Dr. Moonje's followers, the

inquiry committee's report was denounced by an overwhelming majority after a seven-hour discussion.

The Bihar Congress Committee wholeheartedly welcomed the Bardoli and Delhi decisions and adopted the constructive programme. Satyagraha was suspended and the district committees were directed to carry on the constructive programme with vigour, although the Government's repressive policy continued in full force. One effect of our decision was that all those who had seceded from the Congress when the satyagraha campaign was launched agreed now to help it in its constructive programme. Foremost among these was Ganesh Dutta Singh. They held a public meeting in Patna which, along with other non-co-operators, I attended. The meeting decided to offer full co-operation to the Congress in its new programme.

We took up the work of propagating Khadi enthusiastically. A conference to consider the courses of study for the national education scheme was also held. We made arrangements to give monetary aid to the national schools in the province and began intensive tours of the province in fulfilment of our programme.

The Government continued to arrest Congress workers. But, at the same time, the cases of those convicted during the movement were referred for review to Basant Kumar Mallik, Judge of the Patna High Court. He reviewed the cases and, as a result of his recommendations, some were released and the sentences of some others were reduced. But most of the convicted were unaffected and they continued to serve their terms in the jails.

In 1921, Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha was appointed Member of the Bihar Governor's Executive Council after the death of Rai Bahadur Krishna Sahai. He held charge of the Department of Jails. He effected some reforms in jails for political prisoners. The people welcomed them, inadequate though they were, but the jail authorities did not like them. An extremely strict and rough officer from another province, Sir Hormusji Banatwala, was appointed Inspector-General of Prisons in Bihar and that was the beginning of a hard time for political prisoners, despite the reforms introduced by Dr. Sinha. Working at the *chakki* (corn grinder) and indigenous

kolhu (oil expeller) became a matter of routine. Failure to fulfil a certain quota was severely dealt with. There were many crude forms of severe punishment to which prisoners were subjected. On occasions, whipping was also resorted to. Once the large number of Muslims among the prisoners clashed with the jail authorities on the question of *azan*. When the prisoners did not heed the authorities' demand to stop *azan*, they were subjected to very severe punishment.

Mazharul Haq began to write articles condemning the prison atrocities in his weekly journal *Motherland* published in Patna since September 1921. Sir Hormusji had him prosecuted and convicted. I also wrote a highly critical article on Dr. Sinha's jail administration.

The A.-I.C.C., which met now and again after Mahatma Gandhi's imprisonment, stressed the importance of constructive work. At one of the meetings it was decided to set up a board to organise and co-ordinate the work of propagating Khadi, and financial aid was sanctioned for the purpose from the Tilak Swaraj Fund.

Vithalbhai Patel, Congress General Secretary, exhorted the people to join the Congress, to contribute to the Tilak Swaraj Fund, to wear Khadi, to help remove untouchability and to popularise national education. But he was not satisfied with the pace of the constructive programme. A meeting of the A.-I.C.C. was convened at Lucknow which I attended but in which I could not take an active part because of illness. Motilal Nehru, who had just then been released, attended the meeting on the second day. Vithalbhai Patel referred to the slow progress of the constructive programme and suggested the setting up of a committee to tour the country and report on the preparedness of the people to launch satyagraha. Motilal Nehru supported the proposal. The President was requested to form such a committee immediately.

Gandhiji had the knack of assessing public opinion without any such inquiry. He knew the public mind almost intuitively and he relied on his assessment ever since his return to the country from South Africa. The A.-I.C.C. in his absence was compelled to resort to a committee to feel the pulse of the public, but it took us nowhere. We were simply following in

the footsteps of the British who appointed a committee whenever they wanted to shelve an issue.

The Lucknow meeting set its seal of approval on the Working Committee's proposal for the establishment of a board for organising Khadi work. Funds had been allotted from the Tilak Swaraj Fund to the various provinces for production and propagation of Khadi but not many knew how exactly to go about the work which was mostly un-co-ordinated. To avoid wastage and to ensure proper co-ordination, the board was entrusted with supervisory duties and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj was appointed president of the board. He had the utmost faith in constructive work and with great enthusiasm devoted himself whole-heartedly to propagating Khadi and to the anti-untouchability campaign.

The Satyagraha Inquiry Committee set up at Lucknow prepared a questionnaire and asked the Congress Committees to answer it. It decided later to tour the provinces and to record the statements of Congress workers. When it visited Patna, I gave my evidence in favour of Gandhiji's programme. During the inquiry, the members of the Committee came to two different conclusions: one group was of the view that the country should be prepared for satyagraha by following the constructive programme, while the other felt that the country was not prepared for satyagraha, that the Calcutta Congress resolution boycotting Council entry should be rescinded and that Congressmen should seek election to the Councils. These divergent views were based on a difference of opinion even among the workers, though a majority of them seemed to be in favour of popularising the Mahatma's constructive programme.

Eventually, when the time came for the Committee to draw up its report, it could not come to any definite decision. Therefore, it contented itself with giving the views of individual members. When the Committee's findings were published in the newspapers, the differences already evident were accentuated and a controversy raged in the press as well as Congress circles. Those who advocated Council entry came to be called Pro-Changers while those who opposed it and favoured the constructive programme were known as No-Changers.

In course of time the Congress leaders were released after having served their terms of imprisonment, except for Lala Lajpat Rai who was in for a long term. So far Motilal Nehru had not stated his views publicly but when Deshbandhu Das came out of jail we learnt that the former favoured Council entry. Deshbandhu supported his views.

A meeting of the A.-I.C.C. was called in Calcutta to consider the Satyagraha Inquiry Committee's report. I also took part in the discussions which lasted four days. The No-Changers' group, which included leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Ansari and Jamnalal Bajaj, was led by C. Rajagopalachari. Leaving aside the Council entry question, we attempted to evolve a compromise formula but did not succeed. The discussion was, therefore, postponed to the next Congress session.

37

Repression in Assam and Santhal Parganas

WHILE most of the leaders were still in prison reports of terrible repression in Assam poured in. The Provincial Congress had formed committees in district towns and in villages. The Government struck against these. Many Congress offices were burnt down. Most of the prominent workers including members of the Sevak Dals were arrested.

The Assam Government had a reason for the special treatment meted out to the Provincial Congress. The people of the province had become opium addicts. Their energy had been sapped, their physical and mental growth stifled. They aged prematurely and were rendered useless for any work. On learning of this, Gandhiji instructed the Congress workers there to organise an anti-opium campaign. The workers carried on a vigorous campaign which had an immediate effect on the sales of opium which had been a major source of revenue to the Government. When its income registered a sharp fall, the Government decided to suppress the Congress.

Pandit Malaviya decided to visit Assam and I accompanied him. It was the first visit to the province for both of us. I was charmed with the enchanting beauty of the province. Its lush green valleys, its beautiful rivers among which is the majestic Brahmaputra, its sprawling mountains, its forests full of green trees, are captivating. But the wild animals infesting its forests and hilly terrain render agriculture and travel hazardous ventures. Because of excessive rainfall and the humid climate, a large part of the province remains malaria-ridden.

Pandit Malaviya made a strong and forceful speech in Gauhati. He appealed to the people to continue the anti-opium campaign with vigour. I too addressed the gathering, though there was no hope of making an effect on an audience which had already heard a speaker of Pandit Malaviya's calibre.

As time was short and we could not make a very extensive tour we selected such places as were known to have been the targets of the Government's repression and decided to make separate tours of these places; Pandit Malaviya, who had

crossed sixty, was to visit those accessible by rail or steamer and I, those accessible only by bullock cart.

I first set out for a remote village which had been terrorised by the authorities. To reach it one had to pass through a thick forest. On my way, I was surprised to see many Bihari labourers working in the villages. They also plied bullock carts. One day, while having a dip in the Brahmaputra at Gauhati, I had heard two boatmen talking in the dialect of Chapra. They told me that they were fishermen hailing from some village in my district and were now engaged in running a freight service.

The village I was on my way to was 36 miles from Gauhati. Accompanied by some volunteers, I had set out in a lorry, covering 16 miles. The rest of the journey was to be done by bullock cart, through a thick forest. We had arrived by lorry at 12 noon and after refreshments thought of resuming our journey, hoping to reach our destination by the evening. But the cart drivers would not stir before five in the evening because the days were too hot. We were five of us and had engaged two bullock carts. At five we started. We reached a small village at 8 p.m. We could get nothing but parched gram for food. After a brief halt we set out again.

I dozed off in the cart and was rudely awakened by loud shrieks and ear-rending noises made by the volunteers beating empty tins and shouting and singing and the cartmen goading the animals to the maximum speed they were capable of. The road was narrow and we were in a thick forest in the midst of a valley. On enquiry I was told that the forest was infested with wild animals, especially tigers, and they made the din to scare them away. Loud noise usually has the desired effect on wild animals and even prowling tigers move away. Sometimes, however, they came across tough animals who were not so easily frightened and made bold to snatch away a bullock from the cart. An incident of this nature had occurred only recently. I could not have any more sleep. It was with relief that I got out of the cart early in the morning when we reached our destination.

At the village we saw the charred remains of the Congress office. The Congress workers had been arrested. The people were frightened and had become indifferent to Congress work.

Our visit revived some hopes in them and they collected around us. When we told them that we wanted to address them all in the evening they sent word to the neighbouring villages. They told us how the anti-opium campaign had been gathering momentum there till the police descended on them and carried off the Congress workers. In the afternoon three hundred people collected in the village square and I addressed them. By the time the meeting was over, some confidence had returned and the people promised us to construct another Congress office. The police were watching the meeting all the time.

We left the village at 3 p.m. for our return journey across the narrow valley. We wanted to cross the valley during the day time without having to beat the tins. Evening overtook us while we were still in the valley. We were all walking on foot, the carts behind us. Suddenly we heard loud roars of tigers but no animal came into sight. We journeyed the whole night in the carts and early in the morning we changed over to a lorry. We reached Gauhati at 10 a.m. After a tour of some more villages I rejoined Pandit Malaviya and we left for Lucknow to participate in an A.-I.C.C. meeting. On the whole our tour was a great success.

Meanwhile, I got reports of atrocities in Santhal Parganas in my own province, particularly in the village of Pakur. Accompanied by some volunteers, I left for Pakur. When I alighted at the nearest railway station there was none to meet us. We spent the night on the platform and in the morning set out for the village. On the way I met a man whose face appeared familiar. He smiled and said he had known me while I was practising at the Bar in Patna. He had heard about our visit and as the people were much too terror-stricken even to meet us he had come to offer us his hospitality. We had a short rest in his house and proceeded to the jail where the Congress workers who had been arrested a few days earlier were lodged. Only at mid-day could we meet the prisoners and when we returned after the interview it was scorchingly hot. A dog had run away with one of my shoes while we slept on the platform. I was barefooted and could hardly move a step. When I reached my host's house, my feet were blistered. My kind host got me a pair of light slippers made of knitted

grass. In the evening we addressed a public meeting. We then went round to the houses of all those who had been arrested and consoled their families. Our visit helped to infuse some courage in the villagers.

We also visited Dumka where again the people were too frightened to offer us hospitality and we had to put up at a dharamshala. After some time, one by one, people came to tell us of their troubles. We learnt that in another village in the same district a certain person had received some visiting congress leaders well. It was hot and he served them with a fan. For this, he had been deprived by the authorities of his land. In that district, all land was supposed to be Government-owned and one could be deprived of his land unceremoniously. We tried our best to get his land restored to him, but could not succeed.

Then we had an interesting caller. It was a police Sub-Inspector who spoke in fluent Bhojpuri. He spoke with the utmost courtesy. As we had completed our programme, he said, we might leave Dumka as early as possible as there were orders for us to leave the place. When we asked him to show us the orders, the officer left to fetch them; but he never returned. We waited in vain. As we had nothing more to do, we took the night train from Dumka. On reaching Patna I prepared a detailed report of the police atrocities in Santhal Parganas and it was published in all the Bihar papers.

38
Guru-ka-Bagh and Multan

In August-September 1922 two incidents occurred which affected the political atmosphere of the whole country. The first was connected with Guru-ka-Bagh in the Punjab. The Sikhs had been agitating for some time for reform of the Gurudwaras, their religious shrines, most of which are connected with events in the lives of their Gurus. The Sikhs have suffered great hardships and have been subjected to untold atrocities on account of their faith. They are, therefore, passionately attached to their Gurudwaras and view them with great reverence. Attached to the Gurudwaras are properties and land endowed by the people. Those who look after the Gurudwaras are also charged with the management of these estates. The Gurudwaras had slowly become the properties of the Mahants (religious preceptors), some of whom lacked integrity. A section of the Sikhs, organised in the Akali Dal, demanded reforms in the management of the Gurudwaras and wanted the authority of the Mahants kept under control.

The agitation spread gradually. For taking over the management of Gurudwaras the Akalis set up an organisation known as Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. Some Mahants bowed to public opinion and handed over the Gurudwaras to the Shiromani Committees. The Government also began considering the possibility of transferring the management of all Gurudwaras to the Shiromani Committees but no decision was yet taken. Meanwhile, some of the Mahants began resisting the Akali demand by resort to force. In the Nankana Saheb, the Mahant was responsible for the cold-blooded murder of many Akalis. This roused the Akalis who decided to launch a non-violent struggle to take over the Gurudwaras. This, however, was not new to the Sikhs who had had experience of the practice of passive resistance during the Muslim rule and had undergone great sufferings.

The Mahant of the Gurudwara at Guru-ka-Bagh, a few miles from Amritsar, agreed to let the Akalis take over the management of the Gurudwara but retained possession of the

Matha. Near the Gurudwara was a piece of scrub forest, which was the property of the Mahant and which became the bone of contention between him and the Akalis. After taking over the Gurudwara, the Akalis, according to the time-honoured custom, started a free kitchen. They began to fell a number of Babul trees in the nearby forest for use as firewood. The Mahant objected to their action and called the police to his aid. The Government declared the land out of bounds for the Akalis. It was on this issue that the Akalis started satyagraha.

The Akalis defied the Government order and began cutting wood in the forest land. For the first few days, the police arrested the satyagrahis but later they began beating them up and letting them off. Then the police tried to keep the Akalis off the road which led to the forest. This proved futile as the Akalis were full of enthusiasm and had taken a vow to go there. The police now started beating up the satyagrahis so badly that they fell unconscious. The Sikhs set up hospitals nearby to treat the injured satyagrahis.

The news of this satyagraha spread throughout the country. People came from distant places to see it. Pandit Malaviya and Hakim Ajmal Khan went to Amritsar. I also visited the place. The A.-I.C.C. convened a meeting in Amritsar, from where all members went to see Guru-ka-Bagh. We can never forget the horrifying sight we saw. A few well-built, strong Sikhs would move forward with folded hands. A posse of police, under a British officer, armed with lathis would stop them. The satyagrahis would squat and the police would start beating them with lathis. The moment the policemen paused the satyagrahis would rise and move again. The policemen would redouble their lathi charge. This would go on until the satyagrahis fell unconscious. Then the people would come forward and carry away the fallen heroes to the hospital on stretchers. Sometimes the police would drag the satyagrahis by their long hair away from the prohibited area. Not one among the spectators raised his hands against the police nor did the satyagrahis ever lose self-control. This remarkable example of non-violent satyagraha attracted countrywide interest.

Thousands of Sikhs, including prominent members of the Shiromani Committee, were arrested. Among the satyagrahis

were also some who had fought valiantly on the side of the British in Europe in the First World War.

The Government contended that it could not allow the Akalis to take forcible possession of the land which did not belong to them and, if the Mahant called for protection to maintain his possession, it was bound to extend it to him. One Superintendent of Police developed the wielding of the lathi into a fine art. He gave regular training to his men. He had devised code signals on which the policemen were to make the charge in different ways. On hearing his command, the policemen would in a body charge the satyagrahis on their heads or backs. One could not help admiring the extraordinary courage and forbearance displayed by the Sikhs.

When we saw all this, we were convinced that genuine satyagraha was a practical possibility. It only required courage, true valour and the capacity to suffer hardship. If strong and valiant people could display this capacity, no power could ever succeed in subduing them.

The Government at last tried to find a way out of the impasse. And a way was found. Sir Ganga Ram, a highly respected person in the Punjab, took over the management of the land from the Mahant and then passed it on to the Akalis. After some time, a new law was enacted which governs the management of the Gurudwaras even today. This, however, did not come about easily. It took a lot of time and suffering. Incidentally, the utility and the practicability of satyagraha had been once again demonstrated, thanks to the devotion and steadfastness of the Sikhs.

The second incident also occurred in the Punjab. A terrible Hindu-Muslim riot had broken out in Multan just after the Guru-ka-Bagh incident when the Tazia (Moharrum) procession was being taken out by the Muslims. The Muslims alleged that someone from the Hindus had thrown a stone on the Tazia, while the Hindus flatly denied this and said that the Muslims, having planned large-scale loot and arson, built up the story of the stone-throwing as an excuse. Whatever the origin, the riot was responsible for great loss of life and extensive looting and arson.

Immediately on receiving the news, Hakim Ajmal Khan, acting President of the Congress, Pandit Malaviya, Seth

Jamnalal Bajaj, T. Prakasam and I reached the scene of the conflict. There was so much tension between the two communities that our lodging became a problem. Ultimately, we divided into two groups, one staying with a Nawab and the other with certain Hindus of the town. I stayed at the Nawab's house with Hakim Ajmal Khan.

We visited the places where the rioting had occurred. Many Hindus had been killed and those who had survived the onslaughts of the Muslims gave us blood-curdling descriptions of their experience. Many Hindus' houses had been looted and burnt down. I saw Hakim Ajmal Khan greatly moved when a woman tearfully told us that the rioters, on finding nothing left to grab, set her house on fire and threw her caged parrot into the flames. We saw the debris of the house in which the twisted remains of an iron cage were visible. Many temples and religious places had been desecrated.

We met Emerson, Deputy Commissioner of Multan. He was Home Secretary to the Government of India at the time of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and later the Governor of the Punjab. We did not find him keen on restoring communal harmony. He merely stated that everything would be done to take legal action against the rioters.

We decided to take tangible steps on our own to promote communal harmony. Despite the prevailing tension, both the communities responded when we called a meeting of prominent men. Both the communities were willing to accommodate each other and to live in peace. The Muslims especially were worried because it was mostly from their community that arrests were being made. They were also apprehensive that they might be compelled to pay compensation for the losses suffered by the Hindus. Later a public meeting was called which was addressed by Hakim Ajmal Khan and Pandit Malaviya. The latter impressed upon the Hindus the need for unity with a view to resisting attacks on their lives and property. He insisted on the Government's taking action against the rioters. We set up an unofficial committee for the promotion of peace and harmony between the communities and left Multan.

Hakim Ajmal Khan issued a statement in which he denounced the Muslims for their acts of aggression and consoled

the Hindu sufferers. As a result of our visit, tension eased in Multan and the two communities started repairing the damage done and promoting goodwill.

On the eve of the Gaya Congress, some Hindus thought of holding a session of the Hindu Sabha just as the Khilafat Conference was scheduled to be held there. The organisers wanted Pandit Malaviya to accept the presidentship. Great pressure was brought to bear on me to persuade him to accept the offer and I was asked to become the Chairman of the Reception Committee. At that time the Hindu Sabha was hardly the organised body that it is today, nor was its policy necessarily anti-Congress. The Khilafat Conference was always held along with the Congress session and the Congress was not likely to oppose the Hindu Sabha's request. So I agreed to become the Chairman of the Reception Committee and persuaded Pandit Malaviya to accept the presidentship.

Nothing exceptionable happened in the session of the Sabha. Pandit Malaviya, in his address, described the Multan happenings and advised the Hindus to unite and prepare themselves for self-defence. Although nothing beyond this took place, it must be said that this session paved the way for the separation of the Hindu Sabha from the Congress. Later, when the differences crystallised, Pandit Malaviya complained to me that it was he who had laid the foundation of the Hindu Sabha at Gaya and that he had accepted the presidentship of that session at my instance. I did not deny it; nor can I deny it today. I had played a part in the organisation of this session. All I can say is that, as far as I could see then, I found nothing objectionable in joining the Sabha's Gaya session. Even the Muslims of Gaya did not find anything wrong in it.

Hindu-Muslim tension continued to grow after the Multan riots. Reports of communal trouble started coming in from various places. Despite Congressmen's best efforts to control the situation, cases of rioting increased. Generally, it was the Hindus who suffered the most. This was responsible for the move for Hindu Sangathan (organisation) and the Shuddhi (conversion to Hinduism) movement. Had the Shuddhi movement, which had a religious basis, not become fanatical, it might have been less odious. But for some years after 1923,

the Hindu Sangathan and Shuddhi and the Muslim Tanzeem and Tabligh (conversion) held the field, resulting in the defection of many Hindus and Muslims from the Congress fold.

39
Bihar Prepares for the Congress Session

DELEGATES from Bihar to the Ahmedabad Congress session extended an invitation to the Congress to hold the next annual session in our province. It was some days after the Ahmedabad session was over that the acceptance of our invitation was conveyed to us. The 1911 session had been the only session so far held in Bihar. The organisers had a bitter experience then because the Congress had grown weak owing to internal differences and attendance at annual sessions used to be rather poor. The organisers were left with a deficit and some creditors sued Mazharul Haq and Sachchidanda Sinha, Chairman and Secretary of the Reception Committee as also its members, for the recovery of the amounts due. But the Champaran agitation and the 1921 satyagraha had changed the situation. There was political awakening in the province and we felt sure that history would not repeat itself and that response to the appeal for funds would be better this time. When we extended our invitation to the Congress we had no idea where to hold the session.

Before the Provincial Congress Committee met to decide the point I went on a brief tour to inspect some sites. Gaya seemed to offer a suitable location and accordingly I reported to the Provincial Congress Committee which decided to hold the session there. It was, however, decided not to set up the Reception Committee till the membership had increased. A small committee was set up with me as secretary to make arrangements till a Reception Committee was formed. Anugraha Narain Sinha was also a member of the committee.

Remembering the 1911 experience, I decided not to incur any expenditure on credit and laid down a rule that no item of work should be taken in hand till funds were available for it. This was the only way for the Reception Committee to discharge its functions honourably. Circulars were, therefore, sent to all districts to enrol members and collect funds.

At the Ahmedabad Congress, the whole complexion of the Congress session had changed. In order to accommodate a

large concourse of delegates and visitors, the session became a gigantic affair, entailing considerable organisational work and expenditure. We had to create a new township on the outskirts of the city with adequate arrangements for residential accommodation, water and lighting, with a big pandal for the open session. With some difficulty we were able to acquire for the duration a mango grove with open fields adjacent to it in the village of Tunui, two miles south of Gaya. We decided to erect the main pandal on the field and put up residential huts in the grove. In a bungalow in an orchard nearby we decided to hold a Khadi exhibition.

The Congress session was usually held in the last week of December, and we had three clear months after the rains to complete our arrangements. Meanwhile, we set about collecting funds. But the response was not adequate and as the time for the session drew near I became anxious. There was hardly enough time for any contractor to complete the construction of the pandal and huts before the session. To consider the situation a meeting of the Reception Committee, which had by then been set up, was called. I stuck to my original resolve not to incur any liability till adequate funds were available. The laxity of the district Congress workers was causing us much concern but now it looked as if awaiting the collection of funds would lead us nowhere. Eventually it was decided to raise a loan from a bank on the responsibility and personal security of the members of the Reception Committee, deposit the money in the bank and then give the contract for the construction of the township.

The loan amount decided on was Rs. 50,000. Some people wanted this fact to be kept a secret since, they said, any publicity about it would cast a slur on the Bihar Congress and officials and other detractors would be exultant. But, on the other hand, I was of the view that the knowledge of the exact state of affairs would bring the people to our rescue and the Congress workers would also realise the precarious situation to which we had been reduced by their indifference and this would goad them to more energetic work. My suggestion was adopted and the resolution of the Reception Committee was released to the press. It paid dividends exactly as I had forecast. People felt that the honour of the province was at stake and came in

[illegible] workers became busy and began [illegible] and collecting funds with great vigour. [illegible] went on a tour and wherever I went I met with a very generous response. I returned to Gaya with several thousands of rupees after only a week's tour.

The Reception Committee members used to stay in the same bungalow in which we proposed to hold the Khadi Exhibition. As it was unsafe to keep a large amount of cash on my person at a lonely place far removed from the city, I decided to deposit it in a bank immediately after I detrained at Gaya station.

On the platform, a police officer met me. Having read our resolution to raise a loan for putting up the Congressnagar in the newspapers, he thought that, for lack of funds, the Congress session might not be held in Gaya at all. So he asked me, " Hello, have you got the loan you wanted to raise for the Congress session? " His tone implied that no bank would agree to advance us the money. I shook my head and said, " No, we haven't. " " How will you hold the session then? " he pursûed. I quietly replied that there was no need to raise a loan as we hoped to get all the money we required from the people themselves. I told him too that I had just then returned with a tidy sum. He raised his eyebrows and looked dubious. I had no inclination to prove my statement on the railway platform and, as I wanted to transfer my burden, took a conveyance to a bank. The unbelieving police officer followed me on his bicycle. Only when he saw me at the bank counter counting out the money did he believe and leave me, chagrin writ large on his face.

Money came pouring in. Our tours always ended in the collection of good sums. Meanwhile, the construction of the Congressnagar went apace. How could poor Bihar compete with rich Gujerat in providing the amenities and necessities on the same scale as at Ahmedabad ! But I still think that the arrangements we made in Gaya were not at all bad though we spent much less than Gujerat did.

40

Gaya Congress

'HE Gaya Congress Reception Committee unanimously
.ected Braj Kishore Prasad Chairman. There was only one
ontender for the honour and he adopted questionable tactics
realise his objective, but we foiled his plans. This gentleman
ad promised to give Rs. 5,000 to the Reception Committee.
'or a long time he put off payment but on the day of election
Chairman of the Reception Committee he sent us 200 signed
pplications for membership with Rs. 25 for each application.
/hile thus seeming to fulfil his promise to contribute Rs. 5,000
the Committee he was really trying to get himself elected
the chairmanship of the Reception Committee with the
'otes of the new members he had introduced at the last hour.
'hough the Reception Committee membership was quite
arge, the attendance on the day of election was thin and he
night have succeeded in his plans. He had not been of any
eat service to the Congress and I, along with other leaders,
id not like his method. It was clear that he wanted to acquire
y this questionable procedure the status of a leader, and
'elcome delegates to the Congress as Chairman of the Recep-
ion Committee. So, despite our great need for money, we
eturned his Rs. 5,000 stating our reasons for the rejection.

Gaya has a fairly cold winter but that year it was unusually
evere. Though the Congress session drew near, the residential
uts and the main pandal were still not ready. We employed
ore contractors to put up the huts and we were confident
completing our arrangements except for the work of raising
e floor in the pandal and plastering it.

Two days prior to the opening of the session, three to four
undred Adivasis arrived in Gaya, walking nearly 200 miles
om Ranchi and the neighbouring areas. They had brought
ith them their rations and even earthen wares to cook their
od. All they wanted was some space in the mango grove
stay in and cook their food. We were so taken with their
thusiasm for the Congress that we allowed them to camp
the grove. Their faith in the Congress was so deep

that they were prepared to do anything for it. During the non-co-operation movement someone told them that sheep and goats were maintained only to provide one with meat and rearing them was not in keeping with the principle of non-violence. These simple folk immediately let loose thousands of sheep and goats in the forest!

When they heard that the earth work on the pandal was incomplete these Adivasis rushed to our office and asked for spades and baskets. They worked so hard and enthusiastically that within two days the entire work was completed. The Reception Committee was overjoyed at the Adivasis' coming to the rescue and presented each one of them with a free membership badge and a Gandhi cap. It was touching to see their happiness when they received these. Several years later, when I happened to visit Ranchi district, some of these Adivasis whom I met proudly exhibited their caps with the badges pinned on them.

A few days before the session I had an attack of asthma. For the first time during my journey to Multan I had experienced some difficulty in breathing. Hakim Ajmal Khan, who was with me, had examined me and had said I was developing asthma. His prescription had been effective then but during the cold season the attack recurred. I was treated by a hakim and fortunately, I was well within a few days. But when the President-elect, Deshbandhu Das, arrived in Gaya, I could not receive him. Though I attended the Subjects Committee meetings I was too weak to take active part in them.

The brunt of the work in connection with the arrangements, therefore, fell on Anugraha Narain Sinha. My brother was in charge of the catering. Decoration and furnishing were the joint responsibility of Gorakh Prasad, Mathura Prasad and Vaidyanath Prasad Sinha of Muzaffarpur. Badri Nath Varma was the head of the volunteer corps. The Exhibition arrangements were in the hands of Banarsi Prasad Jhunjhunwala.

On the whole, the Reception Committee's arrangements were good and the Khadi Exhibition proved to be a great success. There, besides hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, we displayed woollen, silk and jute textile goods. All the processes in the production of khadi, from the raw material to the finished product, were exhibited. In the case of cotton,

we demonstrated ginning, carding, spinning, weaving, washing, printing and other processes. The different processes of production of silk, woollen and jute textiles were also on view. Considering the poor knowledge we had of the subject — the Charkha Sangh had not yet been established — the result was quite striking and the Exhibition was appreciated by all. The gate money we received more than covered the expenses incurred for the Exhibition.

During the session, I was worried because I anticipated a deficit and I enjoined on everyone the utmost economy. For taking the delegates from the railway station to the venue of the session, a distance of three miles, we had detailed a number of buses. In spite of the ticket system we had introduced, we found it difficult to manage the crowd and many travelled free. We suffered a great loss under this head and we thought that it would affect our financial position but when the session concluded and we checked up our accounts, we were pleasantly surprised to find a small surplus!

The Gaya session was a momentous one. The Council entry controversy had split the party into two camps. Both the Pro-Changers and the No-Changers were preparing for the battle royal at Gaya. So each of the groups tried its best to get as many of its supporters as possible elected as delegates. There were some surprises. M. R. Jayakar and K. Natarajan were defeated in the delegate's election held in their respective provinces. Although both of them favoured Council entry and I was opposed to it, I felt that men of their calibre should not be left out and that their views should be heard at the session. I, therefore, made special efforts and got both of them elected as delegates from Bihar as the Constitution of the Congress allowed a person to be elected from any constituency in India. Both of them, therefore, were happy to be able to attend the session.

This, I should think, would provide an effective answer to those who, during the controversy then raging, made the allegation that the No-Changers were using the name of Gandhiji unfairly in order to strengthen their cause and catch popular votes. Some even went to the length of saying that Bihar being the stronghold of No-Changers and the faithfuls of the Mahatma, the Congress President was not shown the

honour due to him and the arrangements for his reception left much to be desired. We were greatly pained by these charges. We did all we could to offer all possible hospitality and respect and I can confidently say that Dip Narayan Singh, who was in charge of the residence of the President-elect, left hardly anything undone to ensure that the President was not put to any inconvenience.

The presidential address though very lengthy was remarkable and it was naturally dominated by an advocacy of Council entry. When a resolution in favour of Council entry was moved at the Subjects Committee meeting, the President postponed discussion on it because his own views on the issue were embodied in his address and he wanted the other leaders to express their opinion at the meeting of the Working Committee after having heard his views. Later, this question was discussed threadbare, many people from both the groups taking part in the debate. The delegates were so much exercised on the matter that, even outside the Subjects Committee meetings, they assembled in groups and continued the debate. The atmosphere was surcharged with tension.

The Subjects Committee rejected the Council entry proposal by a large majority. The question could, therefore, be introduced in the open session only in the form of an amendment to the resolution adopted. Heated debate continued in the open session also and it was so long-drawn-out that the session had to be extended by two days. I opposed the amendment vehemently. C. Rajagopalachari, leader of the No-Changers, though ill with asthma like myself advocated our case with remarkable lucidity both in the Subjects Committee and in the open session. S. Srinivasa Iyengar moved a compromise amendment, but it was rejected. Eventually, when the amendment was put to the vote, it was defeated, two-thirds of the delegates voting against it.

Council entry was not the only question discussed at the session. The Civil Disobedience Inquiry Committee had submitted its findings on the entire non-co-operation programme, including satyagraha and the no-tax campaign. Resolutions on these subjects were adopted without much discussion as there was not much difference of opinion about them. So were the recommendation calling for the boycott

of courts and Government educational institutions and the resolution emphasising the importance of popularising Khadi. A resolution proposing the setting up of a committee to draw up a list of British goods to be boycotted by the people, which had been accepted by the Subjects Committee, was rejected in the open session, because it was considered impractical and smacking of violence. The resolution calling upon the country to be prepared for satyagraha wanted the enrolment of 50,000 volunteers and a collection of Rs. 25 lakhs for the purpose.

An important resolution passed by the open session declared that free India would not hold herself responsible for any loan or liability incurred from that date by the British Government without consulting the Indian Legislative Assembly. The British Government had been spending large amounts on its own without consulting the Legislative Assemblies, and the Congress wanted to call a halt to this policy while accepting the liability up to that date. This was a new subject and had never been discussed before. There was a lot of difference of opinion but the resolution was carried as were the others by a majority of votes.

The Gaya Congress thus adopted a number of resolutions but to us everything seemed secondary compared to the Council entry resolution. As far as I recollect, no session of the Congress had lasted so long.

The Khilafat and Jamiat-ul-Ulema conferences were also held in Gaya at the same time. The Khilafat Committee had, like the Congress, set up a Satyagraha Inquiry Committee and its report came up for discussion at the conference. Council entry proved a controversial issue in the Khilafat conference also though, ultimately, it adhered to its decision to boycott the Council. The Jamiat took a similar stand. The Khilafat conference was held in an atmosphere of great enthusiasm; in fact, it would be no exaggeration to say that it displayed greater zeal than even the Congress.

But this zeal was to cool off very soon. New developments had taken place in Turkey which were to change the attitude of the Indian Muslims and lead to the liquidation of the Khilafat agitation. But at the time of the Gaya conference the new aspects had not taken definite shape.

The Turks defeated Greece, which, instigated by Britain and France, had attacked what was thought to be a prostrate country. Then the Turks consolidated their territory, reconciling themselves to the winding up of the Ottoman Empire. They deposed their Sultan who was also the Khalifa. When the Indian Muslims later learnt of it, they were greatly agitated but they supported the action of Turkey as the Sultan had been a puppet and his continuance in power would have only weakened and harmed Islam. They hoped that another Sultan and Khalifa would be appointed in his place who would have the will and the necessary ability to protect the holy places of Islam. They thought that, as Turkey had demonstrated her strength, the new Khalifa would be in a position to command influence. But Turkey soon abolished the very office of Khalifa and declared herself a Republic with an elected President as its head.

Another issue causing anxiety to Indian Muslims was the freedom of Arab countries. The Arabs and the Turks were of different races but they had been held together because of the Khalifa, whose spiritual authority no one had questioned. In the First World War, when Turkey fought on the side of Germany, the British incited the Arabs against Turkish rule. The Arabs were freed of Turkish domination only to find that independence still eluded them, for the British and the French took them under their wing pursuant to the League of Nations mandatory system.

These developments, when they came to be known, chilled the enthusiasm of the Indian Muslims and led to the gradual abandonment of their agitation. Although the Khilafat Committees remained in existence for some years, they were there only in name.

41
Swarajya Party is Born

When the Council entry proposal was not accepted, Deshbandhu Das resigned the Presidentship of the Congress. The Working Committee, in which the No-Changers were in a majority and of which I was the General Secretary, by a resolution, asked him to reconsider his decision. He refused, saying that as he could not carry the majority with him he could not continue as President and that he would try to win over the majority through a new party which he was going to form. He said that his association with a new party might create difficulties in the functioning of the Congress if he still remained President.

Immediately after the session, the Pro-Changers made a joint declaration and formed the Swarajya Party. Deshbandhu Das was its President and Motilal Nehru, its Secretary. Prominent among the other leaders were Hakim Ajmal Khan, Vithalbhai Patel and N. C. Kelkar. We, the No-Changers, had thought that since the Gaya session had settled the question of Council entry the Congress would now devote itself to the constructive programme. But our hopes were belied and the birth of the Swarajya Party kept the issue alive. The elections to the new Councils were to take place in November 1923. The Swarajya Party planned to rally the majority opinion to its side and then fight the elections on behalf of the Congress.

Then many prominent leaders were released, among whom were Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Mohammed Shafi and Sri Krishna Sinha. Maulana Azad, who was nominated to the Working Committee at the Gaya session, wanted to bring about a compromise between the two rival groups and he placed certain proposals before a meeting of the Working Committee which tentatively accepted them. Since he had not discussed the proposals with the leaders of the Swarajya Party, it was decided to allow him time to consult them and then discuss the proposals at the meetings of the Working Committee and the A.-I.C.C. to be convened at Allahabad

in February 1923. In order effectively to work for a compromise, the Maulana dissociated himself from the Working Committee.

At the Allahabad meetings over which Deshbandhu Das presided, the Compromise resolution was carried. Its terms were: (1) Nothing should be done as regards Council entry till April 30; (2) each of the groups might carry on with the remaining items of its programme without prejudice to the other's; (3) the No-Changers should according to the Gaya resolution, enrol volunteers and collect funds; (4) the Pro-Changers should co-operate with the No-Changers in carrying out the constructive work and such other items of the Congress programme on which there was no difference of opinion; and (5) both the groups should be free to implement their respective programmes after April 30.

In pursuance of this resolution, I toured the different provinces along with Rajagopalachari. Till then I had concentrated mainly on my own province. This was the first time that I set out on an extensive tour of other provinces and this gave me an excellent opportunity of meeting workers and knowing the conditions there. We carried on propaganda for the constructive programme and collected funds for the Satyagraha. Rajagopalachari did most of the speaking. A gifted orator, he speaks in quiet measured tones. He has the knack of putting his arguments in such a lucid and unique way that he easily wins over his audience. Though people compelled me to speak too, I did not want to spoil the excellent effect that Rajaji made and took on myself the task of rendering into Hindi Rajagopalachari's speeches which were in English. The difficulty of looking for an interpreter at every meeting was thus overcome. The interpreter's task is difficult, particularly where extempore translation of an eloquent and fluent speech is required. I became an expert in this during the tour.

Our tour did create some public interest in the constructive programme, but the work hardly made any headway. We collected about Rs. 13 lakhs and could not reach the target of Rs. 25 lakhs. This gave the Swarajya Party an opportunity to interpret it as a defeat and try to carry us with them.

At this time communal disturbances were reported from various provinces. The tension had not eased in Multan and

riots had spread to Amritsar. The Working Committee sent Pandit Malaviya and Maulana Azad to Multan to try to restore peace. A sum of Rs. 10,000 was sanctioned to help the riot victims. Rajaji and I also went on a tour of the Punjab. Deshbandhu Das, Pandit Motilal and Hakim Ajmal Khan also were concerned over the happenings in the province and along with Dr. Ansari, they tried to evolve some compromise which would ease the situation, but their efforts did not succeed.

It was during our tour of the Punjab that we happened to meet Deshbandhu Das in Lahore. With a view to bringing about an abiding settlement between the rival groups he proposed that Congress work should be divided and entrusted to different departments each under a person having special interest in that work. There were to be departments relating to national education, khadi, parliamentary work, overseas propaganda, labour organisation, anti-untouchability, satyagraha and a few others. He suggested that about Rs. 5 crores should be collected for this work.

After the Punjab tour, we proceeded to Poona where the Working Committee was in session. The proposal for creating departments did not commend itself to the Committee and it rejected it. We received a telegram from Deshbandhu Das and others suggesting that a meeting of the Working Committee be called at Allahabad to discuss the happenings in the Punjab. For want of time we rejected the proposal.

Rajagopalachari was authorised by the Working Committee to go to the Punjab and negotiate with Deshbandhu Das and other leaders who were then there. He was given a free hand and was allowed to call a meeting of the Working Committee if necessary. He met Deshbandhu Das and others and had also talks with Hakim Ajmal Khan at Delhi and prepared a compromise formula which he asked Hakim Ajmal Khan to put before his colleagues. He himself went to Bombay and presented the proposals to the members of the Working Committee. His plan was acceptable neither to Motilal Nehru nor to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj.

But the statements published in the press gave such a twist that an impression was created that the No-Changers alone were responsible for the rejection of the compromise formula.

Even Sarojini Naidu, herself a No-Changer, misunderstood her colleagues and got annoyed with them for having lost an opportunity for settlement. The press was also very critical of our attitude. Motilal Nehru started openly propagating the programme of the Swarajya Party and announced his decision not to attend the meeting of the A.-I.C.C. to be held in May to discuss the matter of compromise and asked his followers to do likewise.

Many Congressmen were frustrated because of the never-ending internal conflict. Several provincial Congress committees adopted resolutions urging a compromise. The general trend was for compromise. Among the No-Changers, Dr. Ansari and Sarojini Naidu wanted a settlement. Jawaharlal Nehru, who had been in prison at the time of the Gaya Congress, expressed himself in favour of an agreed solution of the problem on his release. Eventually, the members of the Swarajya Party agreed to participate in the A.-I.C.C. meeting in Bombay.

At the A.-I.C.C. meeting held towards the end of May, the Working Committee made a proposal that, should the Swarajya Party undertake to abide by the decision of a special session of the Congress, such a session should be called. Deshbandhu Das, who presided, refused to give any such undertaking on behalf of his party. The Working Committee, therefore, withdrew its resolution. Then Purushottam Das Tandon moved a resolution that since a section of the people desired to take part in the elections to the Councils and since it was desirable to end internal differences nothing should be said or done against that move as had been directed by the Gaya Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru supported this resolution. Some raised an objection that the resolution was out of order since it went counter to a decision taken at Gaya, but the President overruled it. By a narrow majority, the resolution was carried. Many of us resigned from the Working Committee and a new Committee was formed. It consisted of people who mostly belonged to neither group and wanted a compromise over the long-standing dispute. Dr. M. A. Ansari was elected President and Jawaharlal, General Secretary.

Rajagopalachari was very much discontented with the resolution and said its acceptance would be suicidal for the

Congress. He wanted either the Council entry plan to be accepted and preparations made for the elections or the call to boycott the councils to be implemented and a drive launched to canvass popular support for that line. The middle course would lead us nowhere, he said. Most of the newspapers favoured Council entry. To many Congressmen who were exasperated with the continued differences, the new resolution was welcome.

The new Working Committee came out with an announcement that the Gaya resolution regarding boycott of the Councils still held the field and that the A.-I.C.C. resolution had only directed that no propaganda should be made in its favour. A similar opinion was expressed by the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee but some other provincial committees opposed this and expressed their inability to accept it as, in their view, it went against the Gaya decision. Thus once again the country was in the grip of a bitter controversy. Far from ending the impasse, which was its avowed aim, the Bombay resolution only accentuated the rift.

On his return from Bombay, Deshbandhu Das proceeded on a tour of Madras province where he made bitter and acrimonious speeches. Referring to the abortive negotiations with Lord Reading, Deshbandhu Das said in his speeches that the Government had shown signs of bowing before the Congress satyagraha and had sent him their compromise terms which he had referred to the Congress headquarters (meaning Gandhiji), but Gandhiji had bungled and mismanaged matters and the people were now being asked only to ply the charkha. Krishna Das published all the telegrams exchanged among Gandhiji, Pandit Malaviya, and Deshbandhu Das. Maulana Azad, Pandit Malaviya and Shyamsunder Chakravarti, all of whom had taken part in those negotiations, published statements.

This raking up of the embers further embittered the political atmosphere in the country. The Working Committee was prevailed upon to convene a session of the A.-I.C.C. which met in Nagpur in the last week of June. It decided to hold a special session of the Congress to settle the controversy about Council entry once for all. The Working Committee moved a resolution in this session declaring its intention to take

disciplinary action against those Congress committees which had raised their voice against the Bombay resolution of the A.-I.C.C. Foremost amongst these committees was that of Tamil Nad and Rajagopalachari was the special target of this resolution.

An acrimonious debate followed. The Pro-Changers held that these Congress Committees had acted against the Bombay resolution of the A.-I.C.C. We, on the other hand, considered the Bombay resolution itself *ultra vires* of the Gaya decision. Therefore, we contended that in working against Council entry we merely acted on a Congress resolution. The discussion continued till late in the night.

I spoke in the A.-I.C.C. meetings only on rare occasions and now I thought I should defend Rajagopalachari. I rose and spoke in English for the first time in the A.-I.C.C. in order to make myself fully understood by the non-Hindi knowing people from the south. My speech appeared to have made some impression for S. Satyamurthi, a great protagonist of the Swarajya Party and a political opponent of Rajagopalachari, came and congratulated me on a " fine speech ", adding, " I did not know that you speak in English so well."

The resolution on disciplinary action was rejected and the Working Committee, therefore, resigned. Another Committee was formed to which those of us who had resigned earlier were appointed again. Konda Venkatapaiya was elected President and Gopala Krishnaiya, General Secretary. A few weeks later the Working Committee decided to hold a special session of the Congress in Delhi and Maulana Azad was elected President of that session.

42

Nagpur Flag Satyagraha

On April 13, 1923 a procession with the National Flag was taken out in Nagpur during the National Week celebrations. The Central Provinces Government banned its entry within the Civil Lines area. A similar order was promulgated in Jabalpur where Sunder Lal and a few others were arrested for defiance of the order. This revived the demand for satyagraha. Many of the Congress leaders who were against satyagraha thought that this was a subterfuge of the No-Changers to sabotage the Council entry programme. The satyagraha, however, commenced in Nagpur on May 1, under the leadership of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj. Volunteers moved towards the Civil Lines with national flags in their hands, and when the police asked them to go back they defied them and tried to move forward. They were immediately arrested and sent to jail. Volunteers began pouring into Nagpur from all parts of the country to offer satyagraha. When Jamnalal was arrested, Sardar Patel took over the leadership. When it appeared that he too would be arrested I hastened to Nagpur after organising a volunteer force in Bihar.

A few thousand satyagrahis from different parts of the country were arrested and the situation became grave. Vithalbhai Patel, a Pro-Changer, also came to Nagpur to help his brother. The authorities took advantage of his presence and opened negotiations with him to put an end to the satyagraha. As a result, the flag procession was allowed to march into the Civil Lines for one day and thereafter the satyagraha was withdrawn. The last procession was impressive, joined by thousands of people with flags in their hands, with Vithalbhai Patel, Sardar Patel and myself at the head. Later the prisoners were released. The happy consummation of the satyagraha had a tonic effect on the country.

We had only one casualty. Out of the many volunteers from Bihar one named Hardev Singh died in Nagpur jail. We brought his body from the jail and cremated it with due ceremony.

It was during this visit to Nagpur that I came closer to Sardar Patel. Although we were old acquaintances it was here that we had greater opportunities for closer contact which led to the beginning of an intimacy which was to last till his death. I cherish his friendship as one of the most pleasant memories of my life. His gravity, efficiency and qualities of leadership inspired in me a deep regard which was to increase with greater association. I won his love and confidence and he was always affectionate to me and to Bihar.

Thinking that because of the Council-entry controversy, the constructive programme was suffering, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj decided to set up a special organisation, manned by persons having implicit faith in Gandhiji's ideology, which would devote itself entirely to constructive work. The organisation came to be known as the Gandhi Seva Sangh, and Jamnalal Bajaj, Rajagopalachari, Sardar Patel, Gangadharrao Deshpande and I became members of its executive. I remained a member as long as the organisation lasted. We strove to steer clear of political controversies and devote ourselves entirely to the propagation of khadi, anti-untouchability and other activities advocated by Gandhiji. Even then our opponents called it a political organisation and classed it with the Swarajya Party.

Despite criticisms, the Gandhi Seva Sangh did very good constructive work. Some of the members were given a monthly honorarium for their services. Branches were opened in many provinces. We opened a branch in Bihar too. We established an ashram in a village in Saran district, but although some individual members attached to it continued to devote themselves to their work with enthusiasm, it did not work well as most of the others could not divest themselves of politics.

43

Delhi Special Session and Cocanada Congress

MAULANA Mohammed Ali was released from prison before the special session of the Congress in Delhi. We had rightly presumed that he too would be opposed to Council entry and since Rajaji, disgusted with the controversy, did not attend the Delhi session, we welcomed the Maulana as the leader of our group. He drew up a compromise formula, according to which no one was to seek election to the Councils on behalf of the Congress but if a Congressman wanted to contest the elections he would be allowed to do so. The Swarajya Party could put up Congressmen and fight the elections on its own strength but the Congress as a party would stay out of the fray.

As the controversy was obstructing the constructive programme we hoped that once a settlement was arrived at, both the groups would take up their respective programmes earnestly. Maulana Mohammed Ali laid emphasis on this point of view and said that he had received support for his proposals from some quarters by "wireless." We interpreted this to mean that he had received some communication from Gandhiji. But we thought that Gandhiji would not send any message from jail as he thought it to be against jail regulations. Shankerlal Banker who had been with him in the jail and had lately been released had reported to us that there was no change of views on Gandhiji's part. Later, however, we came to know that Devadas Gandhi had met his father who had told him that Maulana Mohammed Ali could do what he thought best for the country and must not be swayed by his regard and love for him. It was this message that the Maulana had described in his characteristic way as a "wireless" message. Sardar Patel, Jamnalal Bajaj, Dr. Ansari and I considered to be leaders of the No-Changers, now felt compelled to accept any compromise proposal that the Maulana could devise.

The Delhi session discussed the question of growing Hindu-

Muslim differences which we were afraid would impede the freedom movement. The session set up a committee to investigate all cases of communal tension and rioting and another committee to prepare a draft of a Hindu-Muslim pact. It was also decided to establish Raksha Dals all over the country, with membership from all the communities, with a view to easing communal tension and localising any disturbance.

There was another question causing us some concern — the position of Indian nationals in the British colonies, particularly in Kenya. It was the Indians who had contributed to the development of the colony and made it worth settling in. They were the first to set up business there. Now that the colony had got going, the Whites did not like Indians to stay on in places which were considered healthy and fertile. The White settlers were backed by the British Government and the White population of South Africa. The Indian community was similarly victimised in the Fiji Islands. A resolution was, therefore, moved at the Delhi session stating that it was now clear that there was no place for Indians in the British Empire and that Indians must stay out of the Empire. I was in sympathy with that resolution and that stand was quite correct; all that has happened since goes to justify it. But the Congress rejected the resolution as a result of Maulana Mohammed Ali's objections. It was considered that such a major change in our objective at a time when our movement was at a low ebb and when there was weakness in the ranks was not opportune. So another resolution on the subject which did not threaten withdrawal from the British Empire was adopted.

From Delhi I proceeded to Solan to see Lala Lajpat Rai who was convalescing after his illness in jail. He was happy that at last the rival groups had arrived at a compromise; his sympathies were with the Swarajya Party. On my way back I alighted at Lucknow to get myself examined by the Principal of the Lucknow Medical College, Lieut.-Col. Sprawson, a specialist in chest diseases. He diagnosed my illness as asthma and prescribed some injections which, however, had not much effect.

After the Delhi session, the Swarajya Party joined the election fray. It captured a majority of seats in the Council in the Central Provinces where no ministry could be formed for a

time because the Party refused it, but eventually some members left it to join the Governor's Executive Council. In Bengal, though it fared well, it could not secure a majority but it had a leader of Deshbandhu Das's calibre who soon succeeded in breaking the Ministry. It did not meet with much success in other provinces, although experienced men were returned almost everywhere. Ten Swarajists were elected to the Council in Bihar, Jaleshwar Prasad leading the group. Other Bihar leaders were Abdul Bari and Krishna Ballabh Sahay. Govind Ballabh Pant was the leader of the U.P. Council Party.

The annual Congress session was held in December in Cocanada. Owing to my illness I could not be present in Cocanada for the session and for the Rashtra Bhasha Prachar Conference over which I was to have presided. My presidential speech, therefore, was read by Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, who had been asked to preside instead.

The Cocanada session was presided over by Maulana Mohammed Ali who made a very long and important speech. He emphasised the place of Muslims in Indian political life from the historical angle. But he said a few things to which not all in the Congress could subscribe. The session only put its seal of approval on the Delhi decisions permitting the Swarajya Party to enter the Councils. It was decided to place the resolution on the Hindu-Muslim Pact before the A.-I.C.C. The session established a Khadi Board. There was general satisfaction at the results of the session and the old patriotic fervour showed signs of revival.

While the session was on, Krishna Prasad Sen Sinha passed away. A devoted self-sacrificing worker was removed from the political scene in Bihar.

44
Gandhiji is Released

MAHATMA Gandhi, who was serving his term of imprisonment in the Yeravada Jail, developed appendicitis. The doctors declared that his life would be in danger if he was not operated upon immediately. Gandhiji was taken to the Sassoon Hospital in Poona where Col. Maddock attended on him. When he asked Gandhiji who were his personal physicians he named Dr. Dalal and Dr. Jivraj Mehta but, as there was hardly any time to call them Gandhiji placed full faith in Col. Maddock, an Englishman, and asked him to proceed with the operation. V. S. Srinivasa Sastry, who happened to be in Poona at that time, was called to the hospital where he stayed till the operation, which was performed at midnight, was over. The surgeon was extremely careful and nothing untoward happened except for a small mishap; the electric lights went off, but the current was restored soon and the operation was performed successfully.

At that time I was preoccupied with the Burma Case which had come up before the Patna High Court. I read in the newspapers about Gandhiji's illness and, taking a few days' leave, hastened to Poona. Gandhiji had grown considerably weak and was convalescing in the hospital. Convinced that he was recouping and was out of danger, I returned to Patna. Then I learnt that he had been released by the Government. I convened a public meeting and told the people what Gandhiji had told me in the hospital: that he would not feel happy if he were to be released on account of his health. He would dislike it if the Government's pity and not our strength were to be the consideration for his release. We prayed for his quick recovery.

Gandhiji was then taken to Juhu, near Bombay, to rest till he fully recovered. The country was restless on hearing of the leader's illness. Maulana Mohammed Ali, Congress President, directed all Congress Committees to hold meetings and pray for Gandhiji's speedy recovery.

When a public meeting was convened at Bettiah, in Champaran district, an interesting incident occurred. The Bettiah

Municipal Council had generally been the monopoly of the indigo planters and their supporters for a long time. This continued even after the Champaran agitation had caused a decline in the power of the planters because the Bettiah Estate, which was under the Court of Wards for a long time, continued to have as managers the former indigo planters. In 1922 the Congress began capturing seats in the Municipal Council. In 1923, two Congressmen, Bipin Bihari Verma and Prajapati Mishra, contested for the Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship respectively of the Municipality and defeated Rutherford, the manager and a sub-registrar of the Estate. In 1924 the same candidates stood for election and won. Neither did Rutherford nor any Raj official contest the election this time but the Estate had not forgotten Rutherford's defeat. Rutherford, a former indigo planter, resented the very idea of someone contesting him. Naturally, he was sore at the success of the Congress.

When Prajapati Mishra, Vice-Chairman of the Municipality, went to Meena Bazar, which belonged to the Estate, along with another Congressman, to appeal to the shopkeepers there to attend the public meeting in Bettiah to pray for Gandhiji's recovery, an officer of the Bettiah Estate slapped Prajapati Mishra's companion and turned the party out of the Bazar. The shopkeepers were infuriated and participated in a body in the big public meeting in the evening and, after the prayer, decided to leave Meena Bazar and reopen business on some other site which the Municipality could be requested to lease to them.

The next day the Municipality granted them the lease of a new site where the traders put up thatched huts and reopened their shops. Within a few days, except for a few shops which remained there, the Meena Bazar presented a deserted appearance. This was a rude shock to the Bettiah Estate and its coterie. Rumours were spread that the Estate men would retaliate with violence. One evening, when Prajapati Mishra was driving in a hackney carriage, somebody gave him a lathi blow. He fell down unconscious and the assailant fled towards the bungalow of the Manager. This roused the people. The few traders who were still doing business in the Meena Bazar left and came over to the new site. The new bazar became a

flourishing one, resulting in a rise in the income of the Municipality and an annual loss of about Rs. 50,000 to the Estate. Prajapati Mishra, who had received serious injuries, lost neither courage nor temper and refused to take action against the assailant, known to have been employed by the officers of the Bettiah Estate. He said that the fact that the traders left the well-built shops and shifted to improvised huts, hitting at the income of the Estate, was a sufficient reply to the violence of the Estate officers and that no further action need be taken.

On receipt of a telegram, I visited Bettiah. Returning to Patna, I issued a statement to the press on the incident. A few days later, a meeting of the Provincial Congress Committee was held in Bettiah and it was attended by Mazharul Haq and other leaders. The Committee decided that if the general situation in Bettiah did not improve and Congressmen continued to remain exposed to acts of violence by hooligans, it would be compelled to advise the ryots of the Estate to launch a no-rent campaign. This decision was announced at a public meeting. The question was raised in the Bihar Legislative Council and the matter was hotly debated. Jaleshwar Prasad, who had collected all the facts about the activities of the Estate officials, was able to expose them in the Council.

In the new bazar one could get anything from earthenware to jewellery. The traders were, however, afraid of burglary. As no help could be expected from the police, they raised a volunteer force with the aid of the people of the town for maintaining a day and night watch. Later, when the Meena Bazar reopened, the new bazar continued to exist.

Before the Bettiah incident, I was fully preoccupied with the Burma Case of Rai Bahadur Hari Prasad Sinha which came up in the Patna High Court in January 1924. I was not quite well but I worked hard to prepare the brief. The hearing continued till May. Hasan Imam and P. C. Manuk appeared on our behalf while Sir Ashutosh Mukherji, who had by then retired as Judge of the Calcutta High Court, appeared for the Maharaja of Dumraon. My time was fully taken up with the case. Outside the court hours, I used to work in Hasan Imam's house. On holidays I used to spend my time in his big library hunting for precedents which had so far eluded us at Arrah, because of the unavailability of records there. At last one day

I was able to ferret out not one precedent but several. When I showed them to Hasan Imam, he was happy and said the case was now won. Eventually we did win the case.

During the proceedings, after he had finished his arguments and was preparing notes for the judges, Sir Ashutosh was suddenly taken ill and the next day he died. Hasan Imam and I who were at his side when he passed away were very much affected by this sudden demise. Hasan Imam used to call him Guruji. There is an interesting anecdote about Hasan Imam and Sir Ashutosh. When Hasan Imam was raised to the Calcutta High Court Bench, Sir Ashutosh was a senior judge. Soon after his appointment, Hasan Imam was asked to decide criminal cases along with a senior judge. In three consecutive cases Hasan Imam differed from his senior colleague and the cases were put up before Sir Ashutosh for decision. Sir Ashutosh upheld Imam's view in all the cases. This built up a great reputation for Hasan Imam from the beginning of his career as a judge. At Patna, Hasan Imam and I used to meet Sir Ashutosh quite often. One day Hasan Imam invited him to tea and though Sir Ashutosh was an orthodox person and used to decline invitations from Government House, he readily agreed to have tea at Hasan Imam's house.

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In the Patna Municipal Committee

WHILE I was engrossed in Hari Prasad Sinha's case, elections to the Patna Municipal Committee came up. As the Congress, though it had expressed itself against Council entry, had not prohibited Congressmen from contesting local bodies elections, the Patna Congress Committee, following the precedents of Ahmedabad and Allahabad where Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru had become the presidents of the Municipal Councils, decided to participate in the municipal elections which were held in 1927. Congressmen like Khurshed Hasnain, Anugrah Narain Sinha, Jagat Narain Lal, Badrinath Verma, Abdul Bari and I were chosen as candidates. We thought of putting up Khurshed Hasnain and Anugrah Narain Sinha as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively.

The elections were an uphill task as most of the sitting members had been on the Committee for a number of terms and it was difficult to displace them. Nevertheless, we came out successful as we were a well-knit group compared with our opponents who were mostly independent candidates without any common programme, but we could not secure a majority. Though Khurshed Hasnain got elected by a large majority, we had an anxious time on his account since he was opposed by a Hindu who raised the Hindu-Muslim question. He had the picture of a cow painted on his ballot-box and went from door to door with a cow canvassing votes for it. It would have been a disgrace if a prominent leader of Hasnain's calibre were to be defeated and so we made the greatest effort in his behalf.

Hasnain was upset by the tactics of the opposition and decided that he would not stand for the Chairmanship. He wanted me to be substituted for him. I was not willing because the Burma Case was not over then and I had no time at my disposal but at last I had to bow to Hasnain's presistent pleading. So I was elected Chairman and Anugrah Narain Sinha, Vice-Chairman.

We took to civic work with enthusiasm as soon as Hari

Prasad Sinha won his appeal in the High Court. Anugrah Narain Sinha too had been working on that case, though on behalf of the opponents. Though the work was unfamiliar to us we did not take long to learn things. Just at that time the Gaya District Board elections intervened and Anugrah Narain Sinha was elected Chairman. So he resigned from the Patna Municipal Committee. In his place we elected Syed Mohammed. He was not a Congressman. He gave a good account of himself.

Meagre income and increasing expenditure were our main headaches. We could not undertake any big schemes of civic improvement and there was no way of increasing the municipal finances without imposing new taxes. So I went to Ranchi to consult Sir Ganesh Dutta Singh, the Minister in charge of Local Self-Government, who had given us encouragement on occasions. But nothing came out of the visit.

Patna, though only one mile wide, is ten miles long. As I was living at one end of the town I experienced great difficulty in inspection work for lack of my own conveyance. I could not afford anything better than an *ekka* (hackney carriage), the cheapest mode of transport in the north. It was not quite respectable and there was much criticism, but unlike some municipal employees like the Health Officer and Engineer, I was not given any conveyance allowance and I gamely stuck to my mode of transport. In this I was in excellent company. Mr. Johnston, Additional District Magistrate of Patna, an Englishman, used to go to court in a hired *ekka* and even went to the length of sharing it — and even the fare — with other passengers.

Patna has no commercial importance. In the early days, when rivers were the principal means of transport, Patna had its importance because it stands on the banks of the Ganga. The Gandak and the Ganga meet at Patna and the confluence of the Sonebhadra and the Saryu with the Ganga is only about twenty miles away. But with the coming of the railways, Patna lost its importance in the sphere of commerce. It had no mills or factories worth mentioning, nor has it any now. Only Government officers and lawyers live here because it is the capital of the province. So the Municipality has not much of an income.

At that time there was a complete lack of civic amenities. The drains were uncovered and bred mosquitoes. There was no scientific arrangement for proper disposal of sewage. Before we came to the Municipality every house in Patna had a well-like latrine which was never cleaned. If it got filled up, another was dug near it. Most of these latrines were filled up before we took up office and we covered the rest. The water in the wells near these latrines was saline and odorous. So for drinking purposes people fetched water from the Ganga, which was muddy during the rainy season. So the need of a water works for the supply of filtered water was keenly felt. The Municipal Committee before us had gone into the problem and the matter had gone up to the estimates stage. We drew up a plan and got up an estimate of recurring expenditure. We could have asked the Government for funds for capital expenditure like this but the upkeep of the services would have been the Committee's responsibility and it had no funds even to meet this limited expenditure. Fresh taxes were the only solution but that was not quite easy to resort to.

There was difficulty in getting pure milk in the town. We mooted the question of starting a dairy but, as always, the problem of finance came up. We thought of ways and means of augmenting our income. Seeing that in U.P. the municipalities secure a sizable income from octroi and allied tolls, we thought of levying this duty in Patna. For this we had to pass a resolution and put it before the Government for approval. A majority of the members opposed the resolution. They said they could not countenance new taxes even if that meant doing without the amenities which we proposed. We had to give up our idea.

Graft and bribery were rampant in the Municipality. We tried to eradicate them. The employees became alarmed and placed hurdles before us at every step. Some Municipal Commissioners made common cause with them. So, whenever any proposal for improving the civic amenities was put forward, it was invariably opposed by the Commissioners and rejected.

We were, therefore, convinced that our intention to provide better municipal services was bound to remain a pious wish.

Finding ourselves in a helpless position, we tendered our resignations after about a year's experiment.

The only achievement we could claim during our term of office was the installation of a power house. The Municipality had merely to provide lighting points, in replacement of the kerosene oil lamp posts. Somehow, the members accepted this proposal and Patna was electrified a few days after we resigned.

We tried to improve the living conditions of municipal sweepers. We used to visit their residential areas and tell them how to keep clean. Religious meetings used to be held once a week in their locality and sweets were distributed to the people. We made special efforts to propagate temperance among them but the good work came to a close when we left the Municipality.

We found that the sweepers mis-spent their income and were in permanent want. The men were paid Rs. 12, the women Rs. 10 and children Rs. 5 a month. Thus a family earned much more than a clerk. Further, they were given several concessions and gifts. In spite of this they were in bad straits. The creditor would be around on pay-day and mulct them of their pay packet. Then the sweepers would go in for a fresh loan. This started a vicious circle from which they had no hope of escape. We tried to save the sweepers from this evil. We found that they received their pay once a month while they took loans on several occasions and practically their entire pay went by way of interest. We tried to stop them from borrowing but with no success. We tried to keep the moneylender away on pay-days, but strangely enough this offended the sweepers who threatened to strike. They said they could not get on without moneylenders and the moneylenders would not leave them until all the loans were cleared. We promised to pay off the loans and told them that they should not take loans from moneylenders' in future. But even this simple thing was hard for them to understand.

We arranged then to disburse salaries in the middle of the month and offered to give advances to the sweepers on condition that they would be recovered from the next month's pay. With great difficulty we got them to agree to this. Eventually, when the arrangement got going, the sweepers felt very happy.

Congressmen were returned to several other municipal committees and district boards at that time. Shah Mohammed Zubair became the Chairman of the Monghyr District Board and Sri Krishna Sinha its Vice-Chairman. Mazharul Haq was elected Chairman of the Chapra District Board. The following held various offices: Bipin Bihari Verma, Chairman of the Champaran District Board; Vindheswari Prasad, Chairman of the Muzaffarpur Municipality; Ramdayalu Singh, Chairman of the Muzaffarpur District Board; Kailash Beharilal, Chairman of the Bhagalpur District Board; Harinandan Das, Chairman of the Darbhanga District Board; Mohammed Shafi, Vice-Chairman of the Dharbhanga District Board; Jimut Bahan Sen, Vice-Chairman of the Manbhum District Board; Ramnarain Singh, Vice-Chairman of the Hazaribagh District Board. In the last two Boards the Deputy Commissioner was the ex-officio Chairman.

Thus a number of Congressmen were elected to local bodies in the province. Every place was not as bad as Patna. The Congress representatives gave a good account of themselves though in Chota Nagpur the official Chairman and non-official Vice-Chairman seldom agreed. Our participation in the local bodies elections had a good effect on the people but somehow I was not satisfied with this work. I saw only jealousies and rivalries raising their heads among Congressmen before the elections. Many thought that election to a local body was the reward for their sufferings and sacrifice. People did not desist from exaggerating their services while presenting their claims for a Congress ticket. Those who failed to get a ticket became bitter. I felt distressed to see all this. I thought that it was a small thing that we had got and was surprised that people should make so much fuss over it. I presented my views in an article I contributed under a pen-name to the *Modern Review* of Calcutta. After elections also, the mutual relations among Congressmen left much to be desired. The only exception was the Monghyr District Board. I was convinced in my mind of the undesirability of Congressmen seeking election to local bodies, but none agreed with me and I did not try to impose my views on others. On the other hand, when the opportunity offered itself, I not only allowed Congressmen to participate in elections but also helped them.

At this time, the Bihar Government introduced a Bill in the Legislature authorising Government auditors to declare any expenditure incurred by any office-bearer of a municipality or a district board as improper and if the auditor so thought he could order the office-bearer to refund the amount in question by himself or in conjunction with such members as had given their consent to the proposal. In 1922, a new Act had been passed amending the law relating to local bodies in order to confer on them the right of electing their chairman. The real object of the new Bill was to dilute the powers which had been granted earlier. The worst feature of the Bill was that an auditor had been vested with powers to deal with matters involving questions of law. The Bill raised a storm of protest.

A conference of municipal and district board representatives was convened in Patna to discuss this Bill. Shah Mohammed Zubair, Chairman of the Monghyr District Board, inaugurated the conference. Mazharul Haq was to have presided but, as he was suddenly taken ill, I presided instead. Nearly all the local bodies were represented. The audit bill was unanimously condemned. The conference discussed several other subjects connected with local self-government. The proposal that District Board engineers should be considered Government employees was vehemently opposed. In the matter of education, it was decided that representatives of boards should be associated with textbook selection committees and that those committees should be properly constituted. The conference set up standing committees so that similar conventions might be called when necessary.

There was a tragic aspect of local bodies elections which left a trail of misunderstanding and disunity. Hindu-Muslim riots had been occurring here and there since 1922. The Khilafat movement had petered out and with it the basis for joint endeavour. In Bihar, in spite of our best efforts, communal trouble reared its head and cast its shadow on the social and political life of the province. Unanimity of opinion on any problem receded into the background and only differences were accentuated. The public mind was considerably poisoned and the election of Muslims to high offices became a matter of difficulty in a Hindu majority province like Bihar.

The only Muslim who was elected without any difficulty was Mohammed Zubair in Monghyr. Khurshed Hasnain had had difficulty in being elected in Patna. In Chapra the election of Mazharul Haq to the District Board was no smooth affair and his success was in no small measure due to the efforts of my brother, and this in spite of the great influence Haq wielded in Bihar on account of his services and sacrifice. In Muzaffarpur, Mohammed Shafi, despite his past services, was defeated. We were very sorry for him but he was embittered. Though he did not show his chagrin for some time, he later left the Congress and devoted himself to the establishment of a Muslim organisation. Although this happened a few years later, the establishment of the Muslim Conference was directly connected with the local bodies election results.

As far as the Congress was concerned, the Muslims were not unfairly treated. Quite a number of them were elected to various offices. But they felt that they had not been returned in adequate numbers and, gradually the confidence of Muslims was undermined, with very unfortunate repercussions.

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Negotiations at Juhu

›HIJI was convalescing at Juhu but as soon as he got a
better there was a stream of visitors to tell him what had
ened during his internment in jail. Deshbandhu Das
’andit Motilal Nehru stayed with him for a few days and
ssed *political affairs with him in order to settle out-*
ing differences. The question of Council entry had lost
of its importance since the elections were over and a
er of Congressmen had been returned to the Councils.
'e found that Gandhiji was not quite reconciled to it and
›ur information that he had modified his views while in
as wrong. People of my view were gratified that he was
'ıst in his opposition to Council entry.
ɛr the Juhu discussions, Gandhiji issued a press statement.
id that he was still in favour of the five boycotts — of
, government schools, titles, Councils and foreign cloth
1 that Council entry was, in his view, against the policy
.-co-operation. But he could not convince Deshbandhu
Motilal Nehru and other leaders of the Swarajya Party.
ver, since these people had already entered the Councils
was futile to keep the controversy alive, he advised
ıangers to take to the constructive programme. In
ɛr *statement, he analysed the Hindu-Muslim question*
light of the increasing communal tension in the country.
scribed the Muslims as bullies and the Hindus as cowards.
iticised the Arya Samaj for its undesirable activities,
offended the people. As for the Congress organisation,
›ressed the view that only such people should be elected
office in it as believed in the five boycotts and practised

hat time, an Englishman named Day was shot down by a
i youth, Gopinath Saha, on a public thoroughfare in
daylight in Calcutta. Day died instantaneously and
ath was arrested, tried and sentenced to death. The
Provincial Political Conference met at Sirajgunj and
ed a resolution, praising Saha's patriotism but

denouncing his action. Gandhiji did not like this resolution because actions like these were not in tune with the Congress policy and impeded the freedom movement. Writing on the reorganisation of the Congress, he said that he wanted to place several resolutions before the A.-I.C.C., one of these was about the murder of Day. He published the text of the resolution which said that only such Congress members as had faith in the five boycotts should be considered eligible to hold office in it. This meant that those who had entered the Councils could not hold any office in the Congress and, that if they did, they should resign. Spinning daily for half an hour and producing 2,000 yards of yarn every month to be handed over to the Khadi Board were also to be made compulsory. Failure to do so would result in disqualification for offices in the organisation.

These resolutions put an end to the earlier hopes of some understanding between the two contending groups aroused by Gandhiji's previous statement and sowed the seeds of a fresh controversy. The press, too, began to take sides in the controversy. The Arya Samaj condemned the statement on the Hindu-Muslim question.

The A.-I.C.C. met in Ahmedabad in June. The resolution seeking to bar those who did not accept the boycotts and compulsory spinning from offices in the Congress was opposed on the plea that it was not in consonance with the Congress constitution. The argument was that the rules of the organisation were framed at the general session of the Congress and not by the A.-I.C.C. and that the modifications now proposed would amount to a change in the rules and regulations of the organisation. Mahatma Gandhi, on the other hand, held that there was a rule that, when the Congress was not in session, all the rights and authority to carry on the work would vest in the A.-I.C.C. Therefore, even if the new resolution meant a change in the constitution, the A.-I.C.C. was fully authorised to decide on it, especially when the outcome would be only to give effect to the boycott resolutions of the Congress.

Maulana Mohammed Ali, the President, without giving his views, wanted to know the sense of the meeting. It appeared that a majority of the members thought the resolution to be

valid. Deshbandhu Das, Motilal Nehru and others walked out of the meeting in protest. The resolution was then put to vote and passed by a small majority. Gandhiji then moved another resolution, deleting the operative clauses of the previous resolution under which those who did not act up to the boycott resolution were to be deprived of the right to hold office. He said that he had moved the new resolution because the earlier one had not been passed by a real majority. The resolution was adopted and thus an opportunity was offered to the Swarajya Party to come back.

The dissidents had a talk with Gandhiji the same night, as a result of which the organisational rules were drafted in a manner acceptable to both the groups.

On the following day, those resolutions were adopted. The effect of these was that while the boycott of the Councils was made more flexible, the other boycotts were made more rigid.

When a resolution about the murder of Day was moved by Gandhiji, Deshbandhu Das moved an amendment which embodied the resolution adopted at the Sirajgunj Conference. This resolution of Gandhiji could, as the earlier one before, be carried only by a small majority. People reacted to the attack by the English press on the Sirajgunj resolution and resented that Government should think of arresting Deshbandhu Das for it. He said that he had moved his amendment because his silence would be construed as fear of arrest on the part of himself and his friends.

A representation was made to Gandhiji that some dishonest people had done great injustice to Congressmen by taking advantage of the Congress boycott of courts and that some way should be devised to safeguard the interests of Congressmen. Gandhiji agreed that the right to defend oneself could be conceded to Congressmen, modifying the existing direction that Congressmen, beyond making a statement in defence, should not appear in courts either as plaintiffs or defendants. He had the case of Gangadharrao Deshpande, a member of the Working Committee, in view. He moved a resolution exempting Congressmen from the operation of the boycott resolution for purposes of defence in courts. Dr. Choithram Gidwani raised an objection on the point of incompatibility

with Congress rules. Maulana Mohammed Ali turned to Gandhiji for his opinion and, when Gandhiji admitted that Dr. Gidwani was right, the Maulana declared the resolution out of order. The meeting was to terminate when Gandhiji, pained by the turn of events, rose to make a speech. In the midst of this very touching address, he suddenly stopped. He was choked with emotion and tears coursed down his cheeks. Somehow he managed to compose himself and proceeded with his speech. The members were nonplussed; several stood up and spoke to console him and assure him that they would follow him sincerely and many unabashedly wept with Gandhiji. On this sad note the meeting broke up.

Gandhiji wrote a number of heart-searching articles about the A.-I.C.C. session. The country's press paid handsome tributes to him for modifying his resolution despite the support of the majority. It, nevertheless, appeared that the schism in the Party was growing deeper and deeper. This, of course, dated back to Chauri Chaura which had sown the seed of these differences. The postponement of the satyagraha by Gandhiji had been opposed then by nearly all the leaders from their prison cells. The same tendency was evidenced when the Day murder resolution was discussed in Ahmedabad. These differences only helped the British Government who used them to their own advantage. A few days later, several Bengali leaders, including Subash Chandra Bose, were arrested. Gandhiji did all he could to straighten matters. He made up his mind to settle all internal disputes. He wanted to be at one with not only the Swarajya Party but all other groups which had left the Congress on account of the non-co-operation movement. He concentrated on finding a way out of the impasse.

At this time Annie Besant was preparing a draft demand of Swaraj for India to be presented to the British Parliament. The Labour Party, which had then secured a majority in Parliament, had formed a Government, headed by Ramsay Macdonald. It was expected that Col. Wedgwood Benn, who was considered pro-Indian, would become the Secretary of State for India. But as a result of the opposition of the Britishers in India, he was not given that portfolio. Instead, Lord Olivier was given that post. Despite this, a section of the

people expected the Labour Government to offer some political reforms to India.

In view of the frequent Hindu-Muslim riots and the prevailing differences in the Congress and the country, Gandhiji felt that the Congress should withdraw the non-co-operation movement to enable everyone to come into its fold. He made the following proposals:

1. The Congress should give up all boycotts except that of foreign cloth;
2. The boycott of all British manufactures, except for cloth, should be lifted;
3. The Congress should devote itself to the propagation of Khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity and the removal of untouchability;
4. The Congress should work the existing national educational institutions and should start new ones wherever possible; and
5. The four-anna membership of the Congress should be abolished and membership should be open to all who devote half an hour a day to spinning and produce 2,000 yards of hand-spun yarn every month for the Congress; those unable to buy cotton should be provided with free cotton by the Congress.

With the acceptance of these proposals Gandhiji visualised that there would be no more ground for a clash between No-Changers and the Swarajya Party and the latter could be left free to organise themselves and that members of other groups would be enabled to join the Congress. These proposals were widely discussed in the country. Annie Besant accepted them in a way and felt it was now possible for her to rejoin the Congress.

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Mahatma Gandhi's 21-day Fast

WHILE the country was discussing the Mahatma's compromise proposals, communal riots broke out in different places. There was trouble in Bhagalpur in Bihar. I went there with some of my colleagues and tried to ease the situation. Meanwhile we had news of riots in Delhi. Gandhiji was very much agitated and left for Delhi. After a few days he had to go to Bombay. Gulbarga in the Nizam's Dominions was the next trouble spot. Gandhiji returned to Delhi as trouble had not subsided there when Kohat, in the North-West Frontier Province, broke into the headlines with violent rioting that took a toll of many lives and that was followed by looting and arson. All this gave Gandhiji great pain. In his agony, he decided to observe a 21-day fast with a view to promoting Hindu-Muslim unity. The fast commenced in the house of his host, Maulana Mohammed Ali, in Delhi.

The news electrified the country and anxiety was expressed for Gandhiji's health from all quarters as only a little while before he had recovered from a serious illness. Dr. M. A. Ansari, who knew most about Gandhiji's physical condition tried his best to persuade him to give up the idea but he could not succeed. However, he took a promise from Gandhiji that he would give up his fast if his life were endangered. After the fast began I went to Delhi in order to be by Gandhiji's side. After a few days he was taken to a bungalow outside the city. Meanwhile, C. F. Andrews arrived to minister to Gandhiji's needs. Dr. Ansari stayed with Gandhiji throughout.

At the suggestion of Maulana Mohammed Ali, a Unity Conference was convened in Delhi in which representatives of all religions, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others, took part. The Rev. Dr. Foss Westcott, the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, also joined the conference which lasted several days. As the resolutions adopted at the conference pertaining to matters of communal conflicts are interesting, I give them below.

(1)

This Conference places on record its deep grief and concern at the fast which Mahatma Gandhi has undertaken. This Conference is emphatically of opinion that the utmost freedom of conscience and religion is essential and condemns any desecration of places of worship to whatsoever faith they may belong and any persecution or punishment of any persons for adopting or reverting to any faith and further condemns any attempt by compulsion to convert people to one's faith or to enforce one's own religious observances at the cost of the rights of others.

The members of the Conference assure Mahatma Gandhi and pledge themselves to use their utmost endeavours to enforce these principles and to condemn any deviation from them even under provocation. This Conference further authorises the President to convey personally to Mahatma Gandhi the united wish of this Conference that Mahatma Gandhi should immediately break his fast in order to permit this Conference to have the benefit of his co-operation, advice and guidance in deciding upon the speediest means of effectively checking the evil which is fast spreading in the country.

(2)

This Conference deplores the dissensions and quarrels that are now going on between Hindus and Muslims in several places in India resulting in loss of life, burning and plunder of property and desecration of places of worship. The Conference regards them as barbarous and contrary to religion. The Conference tenders its warm sympathy to the sufferers. This Conference is of the opinion that it is irreligious for any person to take the law in his own hands by way of retaliation or punishment. The Conference is of the opinion that all differences, no matter of what nature, should be referred to arbitration and if that be impossible even to a court of law.

(3)

There shall be a Central National Panchayat of not more than fifteen persons, with power to organise and appoint local panchayats in consultation with the local representatives of the different communities to inquire into and settle all disputes

and differences, including recent occurrences, where necessary and desirable. The said National Panchayat shall have the power to frame rules and regulations for implementing this resolution.

The Conference appoints the following to act as the Central National Panchayat with power to add to their number up to fifteen and co-opt local representatives as additional members: Mahatma Gandhi (chairman and convenor), Hakim Ajmal Khan, Lala Lajpat Rai, G. K. Nariman, Dr. S. K. Datta, and Master Sunder Singh of Lyallpur.

(4)

With a view to giving effect to the general principles for promoting better relations between the various communities of India laid down in Resolution 1 and to secure full toleration *of all faiths, beliefs and religious practices this Conference* records its opinion :

(*i*) That every individual or group shall have full liberty to hold and give expression to his or their beliefs and follow any religious practice with due regard to the feelings of others and without interfering with their rights. In no case may such individual or group revile the founders, holy persons or tenets of any other faith.

(*ii*) That all places of worship, of whatever faith or religion, shall be considered sacred and inviolable and shall on no account be attacked or desecrated whether as a result of provocation or by way of retaliation for sacrilege of the same nature. It shall be the duty of every citizen, of whatever faith or religion, to prevent such attack or desecration as far as possible and where such attack or desecration has taken place it shall always be promptly condemned.

(*iii*) That Hindus must not expect that the exercise of the right of cow slaughter by Muslims can or will be stopped by the use of force, resolution of a local body, act of legislature or order of court but only by mutual consent and must trust to the good sense of Muslims and the establishment of better relations between the two communities to create deeper respect for their feelings.

Nothing stated in the above clause shall unsettle or affect any local custom or agreement between the two communities

already in existence, nor will it authorise cow slaughter in a place where it has not taken place before; any dispute on facts should be settled by the National Panchayat formed under Resolution No. 3.

Cow slaughter shall not take place in a way offensive to the religious sentiments of the Hindus.

The Muslim members of the Conference hereby call upon their co-religionists to do everything in their power to reduce cow slaughter.

(*iv*) That Muslims must not expect to stop Hindu music near or in front of mosques by force, resolution of a local body, act of legislature or order of court except by mutual consent but must rely upon the good sense of Hindus to respect their feelings.

Nothing stated in the above clause shall unsettle or affect any local custom or agreement between the two communities already in existence nor shall it authorise the playing of music in front of mosques where it has not been played before. Any dispute with regard to the latter shall be referred for settlement to the National Panchayat formed under Resolution No. 3.

The Hindu members of this Conference call upon their co-religionists to avoid playing music before mosques in such a manner as to disturb congregational prayers.

(*v*) That Muslims must not expect to stop by force, resolution of a local body, act of legislature or order of court, except by mutual consent, the performance of *arti* or the playing of music, including the blowing of *shankhs* by Hindus during worship and other occasions in their houses or temples or public places at any time even if the house or temple or place in question is situated in close proximity to a mosque; but they should trust to the good sense of the Hindus to accommodate them.

Nothing stated in the above clause shall unsettle or affect any local custom or agreement between the two communities already in existence; any dispute on facts should be settled by the National Panchayat formed under Resolution No. 3.

(*vi*) That Muslims are at liberty to chant *azan* or offer prayers in their own houses or in any mosque or public place not set apart for the religious observance of any other community.

(*vii*) Where the slaughter of an animal or sale of meat is permissible on other grounds, no objection shall be taken to the method of slaughter, whether by *jhatka*, *bali* or *zibah*.

Wherever there is any dispute regarding the sale of any kind of meat in a particular locality or quarter it shall be referred for settlement to the local panchayat formed under Resolution No. 3.

(*viii*) That every individual is at liberty to follow any faith and to change it whenever he so wills, and shall not by reason of such change of faith render himself liable to any punishment or persecution at the hands of the followers of the faith renounced by him.

(*ix*) That every individual or group is at liberty to convert or reconvert another by argument or persuasion but must not attempt to do so or prevent its being done by force, fraud or other unfair means, such as the offering of material inducement. Persons under 16 years of age should not be converted unless it be along with their parents or guardian by a person of another faith. There must be no secrecy about any conversion or reconversion.

(*x*) That no community should attempt to stop by force the construction of a new place of worship by a member of another community on his own land but such new place of worship should be built at a reasonable distance from an existing place of worship of any other community.

(5)

This Conference is of the opinion that a section of the press, specially in the north, is responsible for increasing the tension between different communities by publishing wild exaggerations, reviling each other's religions and by every means fomenting prejudice, and condemns such writings and appeals to the public to stop patronage of such newspapers and pamphlets and advises central and local panchayats to scrutinize such writings and from time to time to publish correct versions.

(6)

It having been represented to this Conference that in certain places acts of impropriety have been committed in relation to

mosques, the Hindu members of this Conference condemn such acts wherever committed.

(7)

The Hindu and Muslim members of this Conference call upon their co-religionists to extend full tolerance to the minor communities of India and to deal with them in all questions of communal intercourse with justice and generosity.

(8)

This Conference is of opinion that attempts on behalf of members of one community to boycott members of any other community and to stop social or commercial relations with them made in certain parts of the country are reprehensible and are an effective bar to the promotion of good relations between the various communities in India. The Conference, therefore, appeals to all communities to avoid any such boycotts and exhibitions of ill-will.

(9)

This Conference calls upon men and women of all communities throughout the country to offer daily prayers during the last critical week of Mahatmaji's fast and to organise mass meetings on the 8th of October in every town and village to express the nation's thankfulness to the Almighty and to pray that the spirit of goodwill and brotherliness may pervade and unite all the communities of India and that the principles of full religious toleration and mutual goodwill declared in this Conference may be adopted and given effect to by members of all communities in India.

The Conference seemed to promise some improvement in the country's atmosphere. It appeared as if members of all communities had resolved to be good and cordial toward one another. It would have been a great thing if that effect could prove lasting, but, alas, it was not to be and the hopes which this improvement raised in people's minds were belied by future events.

After the conference, I devoutly wished for its success, but doubts lurked in my mind. That was because those efforts

were not backed by that determination for unity which was necessary for lasting results. Every community laid emphasis on its rights and privileges rather than its duties. It was my conviction that disputes of this nature could be settled only when emphasis was laid on one's duties instead of on one's rights and privileges. However, one could not but appreciate whatever was being done and so I kept my views to myself.

Meanwhile, Gandhiji's fast continued. Dr. Ansari examined him every day. One day he detected more than the usual quantity of acetone in Gandhiji's urine. It was a bad symptom for an excess of acetone leads to a state of unconsciousness and endangers the patient's life, and Dr. Ansari was alarmed. He told Gandhiji that as he was approaching the danger point he might have to break his fast soon. As the acetone proportion in the urine increased, he insisted that Gandhiji should end his fast. All the doctors insisted on feeding him.

Gandhiji replied that although Dr. Ansari certainly knew better than he, he (Gandhiji) would like to be left alone for one night. But the doctors would not agree. Then Gandhiji said that while the doctors had taken every conceivable factor into consideration, they had forgotten one thing — prayer. He only wanted to be left alone to pray. Unwillingly, the doctors left him to himself. The next day when the urine was tested, only normal proportion of acetone was found in it. The doctors did not now insist on Gandhiji breaking his fast. The proportion of acetone maintained its normal level during the remaining days of the fast and Dr. Ansari felt relieved. The doctors plainly confessed to us that medical science could not account for this miracle.

Throughout his fast, Gandhiji used regularly to spin on his charkha. On the last day of the fast, he prayed, did his daily spinning, sang his favourite hymn and then took some orange juice to break his fast. On the occasion, Maulana Mohammed Ali brought a cow from the slaughter house and offered it to the Mahatma as a symbol of his great affection and goodwill for Gandhiji.

48

Compromise with Swarajya Party

GANDHIJI took some time to regain his health after the fast When he was well he wanted to go to Kohat but the Govern ment would not permit him to go there. Meanwhile, th Bengal Government promulgated an Ordinance by whic it appropriated special powers to deal with what it called th recrudescence of terrorism in the province. It sought to justif the Ordinance by referring to the Day murder and simila happenings. Subash Bose and many others were arrested Rumours held that Deshbandhu Das also would be put i jail. The Swarajya Party felt that the Government move wa directed against them since the Party had defeated the Govern ments in Bengal and the Central Provinces and was obstruct ing the operation of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms The unleashing of repression caused a countrywide protest even the Liberal Party was revolted. Protest meetings wer held all over India. Leaders issued statements condemnin the Ordinance. In Patna, I convened a public meeting wher I made a long speech denouncing the Bengal Government.

Gandhiji was very much upset over the developments anc to achieve unity entered into a compromise with Deshbandhı Das and Motilal Nehru. Under the compromise the Congre was to postpone the non-co-operation programme, excep the boycott of foreign cloth, and each group in the Congres could carry out its own programme. The directives regardin spinning, propagation of khadi, promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and eradication of untouchability were to be obeyed b all Congressmen. The Swarajya Party would remain in the Central and Provincial Assemblies and work as representative of the Congress but would have its own regulations and woulc collect its own funds. The Proposals were embodied in a resolution which was placed on the agenda of the A.-I.C.C. which was to meet in Bombay to consider the Bengal Government's repressive actions. Gandhiji was keen to have othe parties rejoin the Congress. Government's repressive policies helped him in his efforts.

So, on the occasion of the A.-I.C.C. meeting, an all-party convention was held in Bombay, presided over by Sir Dinshaw Petit. Besides the Congress and the Swarajya Party, the Muslim League also participated in it. The convention passed a resolution condemning the Government's repressive policy and demanding Swaraj. Another resolution called for the setting up of a committee to consider ways and means of bringing other parties within the Congress. The committee was also charged with the task of preparing a draft for the demand of Swaraj before March 31, 1925 and placing it before the conference which would meet in April. A fresh wave of enthusiasm swept the country and it was hoped that the people would once again work in amity for the achievement of the common goal of Swaraj.

When the A.-I.C.C. met Gandhiji's compromise resolution provoked a heated debate. Many among the No-Changers opposed the resolution, pointing out that if the Swarajya Party representatives in the Assemblies were to be conceded the right to speak for the Congress, they should also be brought under Congress discipline. But Gandhiji did not want to go that far. However, the resolution was carried.

Gandhiji had been elected President of the Belgaum session of the Congress but he had not yet given his acceptance. After the A.-I.C.C. meeting and the all-party convention it appeared to him that the atmosphere had undergone a change, and the differences had narrowed and he accepted the Congress Presidentship. It was hoped that other political parties would also hold their conferences in Belgaum at the time of the Congress session to facilitate mutual discussion if necessary. But that did not happen. Annie Besant, however, rejoined the Congress and, along with her followers, attended the Belgaum session.

The session was held in the last week of December. The people of Belgaum showed great enthusiasm. Old Gangadhar-rao Deshpande moved about on horseback like a young man and supervised the work. Our usual Khadi exhibition was also organised but there was a new feature this time — a Music Conference in which Karnatak's famous artistes took part. The Mysore Government extended its co-operation by sending the Durbar musicians to the conference.

Compromise with the Swarajya Party was approved by the Belgaum Congress. Gandhiji agreed to a division of spheres of work between the Swarajists and Congressmen. It was decided that, in matters political, the Swarajists should have a major say, while in the constructive programme, the No-Changers were to lead the way with the Swarajists rendering what help they could. For a Congress member it was no longer obligatory to spin. All that was necessary was a donation of 2,000 yards of hand-spun yarn every month. The Constitution of the Congress was amended accordingly.

I had the privilege of inaugurating the exhibition organised by the Belgaum Congress. Maybe this was a tribute to the great progress made in Bihar in the matter of organising the khadi industry. In my speech, I emphasised that if there was no shortage of workers and finance, the khadi industry could be organised on such a scale as to meet the requirements of the whole country within a short period.

As, since his release from jail, Gandhiji had been laying greater emphasis on the propagation of khadi, I had plunged into the constructive programme, especially the khadi work, in Bihar. In December, 1924, we organised a khadi exhibition in Patna. We invited people from all walks of life to visit the exhibition so that they might come to appreciate the benefit that would accrue to the villager from the industry. High Government officials, including the Chief Justice, Sir Dawson Miller, and other judges of the Patna High Court, and a member of the Bihar Governor's Executive Council, Sir Hugh MacPherson, visited the exhibition and purchased khadi. A spinning competition was held and prizes were awarded. Among the prize-winners, the record, 600 yards an hour, was held by a boy who later proceeded to Europe for higher studies and is the author of a number of Hindi books — Dr. Satyanarain Sinha. Lady Miller, wife of the Chief Justice, gave away the prizes.

About this time Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose came to address the Convocation of Patna University. I invited him to visit the Bihar Vidyapith. He had been my teacher when I was studying in the Presidency College, Calcutta. I thought that he might have forgotten me but my joy knew no bounds when I found that he remembered me quite well and spoke kind

words to me. He came to the Vidyapith and made an excellent speech there, full of encouragement and good cheer to the students.

Before he died, Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose donated a large amount for prohibition work in the mining areas of Bihar and asked me to use the income from the interest of that amount. The prohibition work continued under my supervision till my imprisonment in 1942. Lady Abala Bose continued to remit the interest money regularly. On my arrest, I returned the balance to her and the trustees. I had to do this because the prohibition work came to a standstill and the bank accounts in my name had been frozen by the Government. I did not also know how long I was going to be in jail. The Government was good enough to transfer it to the trustees.

There is an anecdote which might be of interest here. Baban Singh, a resident of a village in Saran district, was preparing for the Mukhtarship examination when suddenly he decided to take to khadi work. A man of moderate means, he sold his land and his wife's jewels and used the money he obtained for propagating khadi. Reduced to penury, he came to the Khadi Board and related his sad story. The Board decided to help him. Soon after this, he fell ill and developed symptoms of insanity. He used to sing loudly while plying the charkha. He was obsessed with the fear of snake-bite. Sometimes he would fly into a rage. The people of the neighbourhood locked him up in a room. One day he started shouting and crying from within, calling for help to save him from a snake. When people opened the door of the locked room and went in, they were amazed to find him grappling with a snake and fighting a mortal battle. The cobra had bitten him and he fell down dead but not before strangling the snake.

Baban Singh's wife, Ramsurat, had renounced solid food when her husband had been taken ill and when he died she wanted to commit *sati*. Her people would not allow her to carry out her wish and now it was her turn to be locked up. For some time she appeared pacified and amenable to reason. She used to retire to a dark corner of her room where some khadi and cotton were stored. On the fourth day after her husband's death when she was not seen in the morning people getting suspicious opened her room. They found her

sitting, supporting herself on one hand and holding the Gita in the other. When they went near, they saw that she had been burnt to death. Most of her body had been charred but her face appeared to have been unaffected by the flames. The cotton and khadi stocks were lying untouched. Only a small quantity of firewood in the house was missing. The incident bordered on a miracle. Baban Singh's house became a place of pilgrimage for some time.

49
Buddha Gaya Temple

ON the occasion of the Belgaum Congress session, a deputation from Ceylon, under the leadership of Dr. Cassius Pereira, came to demand on behalf of the Buddhists of Ceylon that the Buddha Gaya temple should be handed over to Buddhists for management. A similar request had been made by the one hundred Buddhist delegates from Burma who had attended the Gaya session of the Congress. After the Cocanada session also the matter had come up for discussion. I had been entrusted with the task of an inquiry into the affair, but owing to other preoccupations I had not been able to attend to it. Now the Ceylon deputation had long talks with Gandhiji who then asked me to inquire into the matter and make a report to the Congress. The deputation was satisfied with Gandhiji's reply and left Belgaum. Lala Lajpat Rai, however, cautioned Gandhiji that international complications might arise if the temple were given over to Buddhists of foreign nationality.

Soon after returning to Bihar from Belgaum, I set up a committee, consisting of Braj Kishore Prasad, Dr. Kashi Prasad Jaiswal and Damodar Das, who later became Bhikhu Rahul Sankrityayana. A Ceylonese Buddhist, Gunasinha, came to Bihar to help the committee in its work and stayed with us for some time. In order to assess the views of the Hindus, I convened two meetings in Patna, but the attendance was poor and I could not take a decision.

At that time, a Hindu Mahasabha session was being held in Muzaffarpur under Lala Lajpat Rai's presidentship. I attended the session to which also came some representatives of the Mahant of the Buddha Gaya temple. The Hindu Mahasabha adopted a resolution recommending the management of the temple by a joint committee of Hindus and Buddhists but suggested that the question should be studied further and that a committee should be set up to enlist the support of the Mahant. So, on the committee I had already set up and which the Hindu Mahasabha also adopted as its

own the Mahant was co-opted as a member. When it started work, however, the Mahant stayed away from the meetings. So the committee of four prepared a detailed report on behalf of the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha.

We recommended that the management of the Buddha Gaya temple should be handed over to a joint committee of Hindus and Buddhists and that religious ceremonies in the temple should be performed according to Buddhist rites, without depriving Hindus of the right to worship and offer puja there.

The principal place of pilgrimage for Buddhists, the Buddha Gaya temple management has been in the hands of a Shaivite Mahant. The Hindus consider Lord Buddha as one of the ten *avatars* (incarnations), although Buddha puja is not current among Hindus. The arrangements regarding puja and worship in vogue in the temple were hardly in keeping with the dignity and importance of the great shrine. We thought that there was substance in the complaint of the Buddhists and so we recommended that if the ceremonials were to be improved they must be conducted by the Buddhists themselves.

We met the Mahant and tried to persuade him to agree to our proposal. We assured him of reasonable compensation for his loss in income from the offerings of pilgrims. He would not agree and said that his income from devotees did not generally cover the expenses incurred by him on the temple. What he realised from the temple, not beyond Rs. 2,000 annually, was insignificant compared to the income from his own Math which ran into several lakhs of rupees. He said it was a position of great honour and because of it he commanded a great respect in India and abroad. He would not, therefore, relinquish it. He failed to appreciate our argument that his agreement to our proposal would only enhance his prestige. When our efforts failed, we recommended the postponement of the issue to a more opportune time.

The report was submitted to the next A.-I.C.C. session and was accepted. So far, the report has not been given effect to. When the Congress formed a Ministry some years later, a deputation from Ceylon came with the same demand and saw me while I was ill in Zeradei. It met the Bihar Premier also. As the Mahant was not agreeable to any compromise,

there was no alternative to legislation to implement the Report. I wrote to the Premier and he took steps to have a Bill drawn up, but on account of other preoccupations, no progress could be made and the question remained unsolved when the Ministry went out of office in 1939. I hold and believe that justice and fairness require that the management of the temple should be entrusted to the Buddhists, but as Hindus also look upon Lord Buddha as one of the incarnations they should also be represented.

One interesting point has to be mentioned here. In Ceylon there is a famous temple known as Katargama. The Hindus claim that it is theirs but the Buddhists have taken possession of it. When we were inquiring into the Buddha Gaya temple dispute, I received a number of telegrams and letters from Hindus in Ceylon pleading that we should not give any right to the Buddhists in the Gaya temple so long as the Buddhists did not concede the rights of Hindus to the Katargama temple. If the matter had proceeded further, it is possible that that proposal also could have been considered, but that stage was never reached.

50

Death of Deshbandhu Das

DESHBANDHU Das's health began deteriorating at the time of the Belgaum Congress. Then for some days he came to Patna where he stayed with his brother, P. R. Das. I went to meet him there quite often. One day he asked me to teach him spinning. He was slow to learn and talking on this said that in such things neither his hands nor his brain moved properly and, left to himself, he could not even turn the key in his box and unlock it. For a few days I taught him spinning and when I had to go on tour I entrusted the work to another friend. Deshbandhu Das and I had long talks on the political situation.

When the Swarajya Party took part in the 1923 elections in accordance with the Delhi Congress resolution, they were not in any great strength in any Council since the Congress as a whole was not in the contest and since they had gone there not to work but wreck the constitution. Still, its representatives came to have considerable influence, especially in Bengal, the Central Provinces and the Central Assembly. They brought new life to these legislatures and adopted new procedures and tactics which attracted other parties to it.

Motilal Nehru was the leader of the Swarajya Party in the Central Assembly. With the help of other parties, the Swarajists were able to throw out the Budget proposals and the Governor-General had to use his special powers to certify the Budget. A similar thing happened in the Central Provinces where the Swarajya Party was in a majority and the Ministry fell; the Governor assuming all the powers. In Bengal, the party was in a minority but Deshbandhu Das's personality was powerful enough to rally the majority against the Government's Budget proposals and here also the Ministry fell and the Governor had to assume all powers. This state of affairs continued for two years. In Bengal, Deshbandhu Das was also successful in getting the official motion seeking to justify the Government's repressive policy defeated. These developments had an encouraging effect on the people while they exasperated

officialdom. The success of the Swarajya Party was one of the reasons for Gandhiji's agreeing to a compromise with it. But the strategy was not likely to be successful for long. The patchwork alignment between the Swarajya Party and various other groups in the Central Assembly weakened; and the Swarajists were left alone. In the Central Provinces also when many cast tempting glances to ministerial chairs dissensions came to the surface. In view of these developments, Deshbandhu Das started thinking in terms of some kind of honourable settlement with the British Government.

The Labour Party, which had approved the arrests and repressive measures launched by the Indian Government, lost in the elections in England and the Conservatives came to power. Lord Birkenhead was appointed Secretary of State for India. He was a staunch Conservative and imperialist, but Deshbandhu Das thought that he was a very brilliant and strong-minded man. It was not unlikely that he might do something for India. Some secret negotiations seemed to have been set afoot. Deshbandhu Das was hopeful of peace and understanding between India and Britain. He even said that if Birkenhead failed us, we would have nothing left to help realise our aspirations but Gandhiji's charkha.

As far as he could, Deshbandhu Das wanted to clear the way for a settlement. He knew that Britishers suspected that the Swarajya Party of Bengal was connected with the revolutionaries. This suspicion had only been confirmed by the Sirajganj resolution of the Bengal Congress. Deshbandhu Das tried to remove this suspicion. He issued a statement in which he categorically said that the Congress and the Swarajya Party had never supported, and would never support, the activities of those who indulged in murder and, indeed, they were convinced that such activities only placed obstacles in the way to the achievement of Swaraj. He added that the policy of creating administrative deadlocks adopted by the Swarajya Party was the only proper course and that his party would continue to adhere to it as long as there was no settlement between India and Britain.

The first part of Deshbandhu's statement pleased the Britishers. Even Lord Birkenhead welcomed it but desired that Indians should co-operate with Britain in working the

Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms because that was an essential condition for political progress. This did not dampen Deshbandhu's hopes. At this time, he was elected President of the Bengal Political Conference which was held at Faridpore. Gandhiji, who wanted to tour Bengal, took the opportunity to participate in the Conference. In his presidential address, Deshbandhu reiterated his hopes of settlement. His hopes were, however, not to be fulfilled. His health, which had not been good for some time then, now began to further deteriorate. He went to Darjeeling, accompanied by Gandhiji. I had thought of going there to meet Gandhiji and persuade him to visit Bihar but because of ill health could not proceed beyond Jalpaiguri. Therefore, I sent Mathura Prasad to Darjeeling. Gandhiji agreed to my wishes but meanwhile, Deshbandhu Das's condition grew worse and he passed away.

The news of Deshbandhu's demise plunged the whole country into sorrow. His body was taken to Calcutta where unprecedented crowds of mourners came to pay their last tribute to the departed leader. The funeral procession was the biggest ever seen in Calcutta. Gandhiji also attended the funeral and immediately started collecting funds for a memorial to Deshbandhu. As he was engaged in this work for some time, he could not come to Bihar.

51
Social Reform

DURING 1924 we had two marriages in our family. My younger niece, Rama, was to be married to Vidyadutt Ram of Lucknow and my elder son, Mrityunjaya, to Vidyavati, daughter of Braj Kishore Prasad. The party from Lucknow, though not large, came with the usual pomp. Most of the members were from aristocratic families. The parents of the bridegroom were related to Rai Bahadur Hari Prasad Sinha who was responsible for arranging the match. My brother put up tents for the party and made the best possible arrangements for their stay. Mrityunjaya's marriage, on the other hand, provided a striking contrast. It was a simple and unostentatious ceremony.

For our sons' marriages, my brother and I never accepted any dowry, but while giving away our daughters we had to pay handsome amounts. On some occasions, it was almost extorted from us. Therefore, my experience of these marriages has always been bitter. Till the evil customs prevailing in our society are ended, daughters will continue to be looked upon as great liabilities in every household.

The All-India Kayastha Conference was inaugurated about the same time as the Indian National Congress. I think in the very first conference it was decided that members of the community should not demand dowry in cash or in any other form from the girl's father. Unfortunately, the very leaders of the Conference honoured its resolutions in the breach. Indeed, there were some who made their prominent position in the Conference the basis for making bigger demands. That is one of the reasons why, although it is one of the oldest caste organisations, the Kayastha Conference has not achieved much success.

When in 1916 I moved from Calcutta to Patna, a few Kayastha friends asked me to sign a pledge that at the time of my sons' marriages, I would not take from the brides' parents in cash or otherwise more than Rs. 51. I readily signed the pledge because I was at one with that view. My brother was more radical. He was of the view that we should

not even join a marriage party where the father of the bridegroom was guilty of accepting any *tilak* or dowry. At that time two of my nieces had already been married and for both of them we had to pay *tilak* and dowry. Only one of the nieces remained to be married but we had three sons still unmarried. So, in spite of the fact that we had to pay dowry in the case of the girls' marriages and suffer the usual indignities, we were determined not to accept any dowry, etc. in the case of our boys. And we stood by that pledge and did not take any money by way of *tilak* or dowry for the marriage of any of our three sons.

In 1925 when I was elected President of the Jaunpur session of the Kayastha Conference, I accepted it in the hope that I might be able to take some effective action to abolish these customs. Two significant resolutions were adopted by the Conference. The first, which banned acceptance of *tilak* and dowry, carried a rider that no one should participate in a marriage where this condition was not honoured. The second called for marital connections among the different sub-sects of the Kayastha community.

The first resolution did not prove effective for dowries continued to be demanded and paid. Perhaps the evil system is doomed to persist because educated young men themselves have now begun to demand money for educational expenses, especially for overseas education. Therefore, even when the older generation disappears, it appears as if the situation will not improve.

Inter-marriage among the sub-sects, however, has become common and none questions its propriety. Remarriage of young widows is still not so common. Though on this question I had no clear views at that time, I later realised the need for it. By giving consent to a few widow remarriages, I have encouraged this reform.

52

Mahatma's Tour of Bihar

THE rules demanding the contribution of 2,000 yards of self-spun yarn a month as Congress subscription fee and wearing of khadi on all Congress occasions became a bone of contention. It was opposed by the Swarajists, more so by outsiders who wished to join the Congress. Even a section of Congressmen were against it. The Swarajya Party had accepted it at Belgaum, but quite a number of prominent leaders of the party had not subscribed to it wholeheartedly. They contended that, by making spinning a condition of membership, the Congress further narrowed its sphere and its membership was bound to decline. Gandhiji, on the other hand, thought that if every member would take to spinning, the party would have an army of dependable, honest and true Congressmen and that numerical strength was immaterial. But this hope was never fulfilled. In spite of our best efforts, membership began to fall steadily, with the result that Gandhiji himself became concerned. He, therefore, modified his views and declared that Swarajists, if they so desired, could be exempted from the rule and could pay the four-anna fee instead, but he would not agree that the condition about spinning should be cancelled altogether. He was also against the withdrawal of the condition about habitual wearing of khadi as had been desired by some. Gandhiji discussed the question with Motilal Nehru and it was decided to amend the rules again. A separate organisation was decided to be set up for promoting spinning and khadi. This organisation was to work as an autonomous wing of the Congress, leaving the Swarajya Party free to work the political programme.

After a few days' stay in Bengal, Gandhiji agreed to undertake a tour of Bihar. The Bihar Provincial Congress session was to be held that year (1925) in Purulia under the presidentship of Shah Mohammed Zubair. The people of the province were eager to have Gandhiji in it.

A little earlier, he had visited Jamshedpur at the request of C. F. Andrews. A union of the Tata Iron and Steel Works

employees had been set up there and Deshbandhu Das had been chairman of the Union. The Tatas had not recognised it. C. F. Andrews, who had been elected chairman of the union after Deshbandhu's demise, wanted Gandhiji to help in the matter. At the time of Gandhiji's visit, R. D. Tata, the Managing Director of the Tata enterprises, happened to come to Jamshedpur. The company gave a big reception to the Mahatma. I was also there. We stayed for two days and went round the Tata works and had discussions with the Directors. The result was that the labour union was recognised by the company, which also agreed to realise the union membership subscriptions from the employees' wages. Gandhiji's visit was a great success.

The Purulia session of the Bihar Congress was a grand affair. Gandhiji came from Bombay to participate in it. He detrained at Sini and from there he was taken in a special train to Purulia. One of the special features of the session was a big exhibition inaugurated by Gandhiji. After the conference, the Mahatma started his tour of Chota Nagpur.

Gandhiji, it was hoped, would be able to tour the whole province. I have witnessed how keen the people of any province he visits are that he should cover as many places as possible to enable the largest number of people to see him. This is but natural, but at places this fervour transgresses all reasonable limits. I must confess that I have myself been guilty of such transgression. The itinerary prepared by us was very heavy and Gandhiji's health, already weakened by constant touring for months on end, could not stand it. After the Chota Nagpur tour we were all to go to Patna where the A.-I.C.C. was to meet, and from there the tour of the other districts of Bihar was to begin. But Chota Nagpur itself was a tremendous strain on Gandhiji. On the last day of his tour of the Hazaribagh district, he was rendered almost unconscious while entraining at the Kodarama railway station. The crowds were getting unmanageable. We had no idea how ill Gandhiji was but this collapse made us realise our mistake and we put off the tour for some time and decided to let him rest in a bungalow on the banks of the Ganga. This helped him recover from the strain, despite the fact that a stream of people continued to come to have his *darshan*.

At its Patna meeting, the A.-I.C.C. approved the amendment of the membership rules as already agreed upon. A new organisation called the All-India Charkha Sangh was set up. An autonomous body but affiliated to the Congress, it had all assets invested in Khadi work transferred to it. Gandhiji framed its constitution and was elected chairman. I was made one of the life trustees and members of the executive committee. An agent and a secretary were appointed for each province. I was the agent for Bihar, Jawaharlal Nehru for U.P., Satish Chandra Das Gupta for Bengal, and Rajagopalachari for Tamil Nad. In the last quarter of a century, the Sangh has done yeoman service in the matter of promotion and improvement of the khadi industry. It has distributed by way of wages crores of rupees to the poor, particularly among helpless women.

It was decided that the Congress should fight the elections and Pandit Motilal Nehru was put in charge of the work. Although my views about elections were unaltered, I thought it was my duty to carry out this programme to the best of my ability and I assured Motilal Nehru of my full co-operation in Bihar.

The elections were held towards the beginning of 1926. The elections to the Council of State took place first. For four seats from Bihar, one Muslim and three non-Muslim, we nominated Shah Mohammed Zubair, Sri Krishna Sinha, Anugrah Narain Sinha and Mahendra Prasad (my brother). Persons like the Maharaja of Darbhanga and the Maharaja of Dumraon were our opponents. We had an uphill fight because the voters were mostly from the moneyed classes, zamindars and business men and they were not many. There were no fixed polling booths and the voters could send their ballot papers by post after marking their vote in the presence of a Government official. This resulted in a great scramble for collection of ballot papers, because success depended on the expedition with which they were collected and despatched. Further, Orissa was then part of Bihar and we had a wide area to tour for canvassing votes. Our strenuous efforts resulted in the election of three of our candidates, Sri Krishna Sinha losing to the Maharaja of Darbhanga.

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Differences in the Swarajya Party and the Kanpur Congress

THE hope that, as a result of the amendment of the Congress constitution and the membership rules, people belonging to other parties would join the Congress in large numbers was never fulfilled. The sub-committee which the All-Parties Conference in Bombay had set up in 1924 to explore all avenues of rapprochement between the Congress and other parties could not arrive at any conclusion and had dissolved itself after admitting failure. Nevertheless, negotiations continued in one form or another.

The Liberals and leaders like Mohammedali Jinnah had three main grievances. Firstly, the Congress had no doubt agreed to postpone satyagraha but it had not abandoned it altogether. In fact, the Congress wanted to prepare the whole country for it and, on that point, the No-Changers and Swarajists were one. The only difference was that while the Swarajists thought that Councils could be used as a means for preparing the country for satyagraha, the No-Changers were sure that, far from being a help, the Council entry programme would be an obstruction to the attainment of their objective.

Secondly, the Congress emphasis on the propagation of khadi and the charkha and the wearing of khadi while doing Congress work was repugnant to other parties as they had no faith in the charkha or khadi. Even inside the Congress there were some who shared this lack of faith.

Thirdly, what frightened the outsiders was the fact that the Council entry programme was entrusted to the Swarajya Party. Most of the non-Congress parties, who were primarily interested in this programme and attached great importance to it, thought that, even if they joined the Congress, they might not be able to enter the Councils or influence Congress policy, because the views of the Swarajists would be supreme. They believed in working the Constitution by accepting office

in the provinces and were against the policy of creating deadlocks in the Councils. These fundamental differences, therefore, kept the Congress and other parties apart.

Differences within the Swarajya Party itself in the Central Provinces over the question of accepting office in the Governor's Executive Council which had arisen during the last days of Deshbandhu Das, now came to the surface. A prominent Swarajist, Tambe, who was President of the C. P. Legislative Assembly, accepted membership of the Governor's Executive Council without consulting members of his party and without tendering resignation. This started a furore within the party. Pandit Motilal Nehru disapproved of Tambe's action, but Kelkar, Jayakar and Dr. Moonje supported it. Abhyankar condemned Tambe and Moonje openly joined issue with him. Kelkar and Jayakar openly propagated that the policy of creating deadlocks be replaced by a new policy — of responsive co-operation. Internal dissensions deepened.

At this time the Congress session was held at Kanpur. Sarojini Naidu was elected President. She had some time previously returned from South Africa where she had done good work and earned a name for herself. Gandhiji had wanted to propose her name for the presidentship of the Belgaum session but his colleagues had pressed him to take it up himself. Even then it was known that the next President would be Sarojini Naidu.

At the Congress session, the Swarajya Party was to formulate the main programme and so the Working Committee formulated the resolution for the Subjects Committee in consultation with Motilal Nehru. The resolution demanded that the British Government should frame another Constitution for India on the lines of the demand for Swaraj made in the Indian Legislative Assembly. If satisfactory action was not taken by Britain before February 1926, all Swarajist members of the Legislative Councils would, after making a statement on the floor of the House, leave the Councils and remain outside till further notice and devote themselves to the constructive programme. The critics of the Swarajists pointed out that the January sessions of the Assemblies were the last sessions since general elections were to be held in 1926 and that the Swarajist

walk-out would not be of much significance. The resolution, however, was approved.

The session also passed two resolutions, one condemning the anti-Indian Bill in South Africa and the other denouncing the anti-Indian policy pursued in Burma.

Responsive co-operationists interpreted the resolution on Council walk-out as the re-emergence of the policy of non-co-operation and thought that their own programme would have no place in the Congress. Jayakar, Kelkar, Moonje and their followers, therefore, resigned from the Council and established a separate party of responsive co-operationists.

My own view had always been that if we entered legislatures at all we should do whatever we could under the Constitution. I had never been able to understand the policy of deadlocks. But, of course, I considered Council entry useless because the rights which the 1920 Constitution gave us were entirely inadequate. Entry into Councils would only create illusions and differences while non-co-operation sought to draw the public towards popular institutions, diverting its attention from the British Government and its institutions. Non-co-operation would awaken the constructive strength of the people whereas Council entry would divert them from the main goal of Swaraj.

The Swarajists, on the other hand, thought that satyagraha would be possible only if it could be ensured that other parties would not seek election to the Councils. As that was not possible, they thought that the next best step would be for Congressmen to undertake satyagraha inside the Councils and make it impossible for the Government to work the Constitution. In fact, that is what they did in some of the provinces and at the Centre. There is no doubt that this had some effect on the people.

Whatever my view, I could hardly be the judge of the final Congress policy. I felt that those who had gone to the Councils were the right persons to decide on the next step and that I should accept the policy laid down by the Congress. In implementing that policy I decided to lend every possible support. Perhaps, Gandhiji was not prepared to go so far. He thought that the No-Changers having conceded the right of Council entry to others should not be compelled by anyone to vote or

help in electioneering. However, I felt that personal views had to be submerged before Party considerations and that I should do what I could to implement the programme. Accordingly, I devoted all my energies and time to working in the Congress election campaign.

As usual, a Swadeshi exhibition was held in Kanpur. One day it was rumoured that the Congress camp was to be set on fire. Volunteers of the Hindustan Seva Dal mustered in large numbers under the leadership of Dr. Hardikar and watch posts were set up near the camp. Nothing untoward, however, happened. But another incident caused us some anxiety. Certain grievances had been ventilated to the Working Committee about the conduct of elections to the Ajmer Provincial Congress Committee and the elections had been declared null and void. This had offended some persons who, led by Arjun Lal Sethi, wanted to storm the Congress pandal and prevent others from entering it. The Seva Dal again came to our rescue and handled the delicate situation successfully.

It was at the Kanpur session, to which my brother and I went with our families, that I met Miraben for the first time. She had been in India for some time, but I had not met her till then. I was very much impressed by her faith and devotion. The British could not possibly like such a well-connected Englishwoman, the daughter of an English Admiral, to be in Gandhiji's ashram. Some British newspapers insinuated that the Mahatma had somehow trapped her. But the facts were otherwise and Miraben contradicted the insinuation. The violence and cruelty she had witnessed during the First World War had made a deep impression on her mind and in quest of peace she went to Romain Rolland for guidance. He advised her to read Gandhiji's books and as she did so she came to have great faith in Gandhiji's teachings. She wrote to him seeking permission to come to India and stay with him. Gandhiji dissuaded her. Even in England she began to live the disciplined life of an ashramite. When her insistence grew, Gandhiji allowed her to come.

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An Independent Group within the Congress

WHEN the A.-I.C.C. failed to receive a satisfactory reply from the Government to its resolution by the end of March, it called on all the Swarajists to withdraw from the legislatures. On an appointed date, the Swarajya Party complied with the directive. Motilal Nehru made a statement in the Central Legislative Assembly explaining the reasons for the party's action. It had been decided that those who had been relieved of legislative work should devote their time to constructive work, but only few of them did so. New elections were to take place by the end of the year and people started preparing for them.

Meanwhile some incidents occurred which need mention here. The relations between Hindus and Muslims had been embittered and riots had become frequent. Gandhiji had wanted to go to Kohat to investigate the cause of the riot there but the Government had banned his entry for a long time. Therefore, accompanied by Maulana Shaukat Ali, he went to Rawalpindi where they invited people to give evidence about the Kohat happenings. Differences arose between the two leaders on certain points and, when they published two different reports on the Kohat riots, it became known that these leaders, who mostly thought alike, were not of one view on this communal issue. The Mahatma tried to explain that difference of opinion did not mean that they had ceased to be good friends. But the fact remained that there were differences between them and it did not have a good effect on the people. The communal problem grew more and more complicated while differences on the political plane also persisted.

Gandhiji, whose health had gradually deteriorated and who somehow had carried on till the Kanpur Congress, now withdrew from all political work. After consultation with his doctors, he went to the Sabarmati Ashram to stay there for a

year. He devoted himself only to organising the ashram and propagating khadi.

Communal tension was on the increase. Calcutta was rocked by one of the biggest riots it had ever seen which broke out on the occasion of Id and went on for weeks, resulting in the death of many belonging to both the communities. These happenings agitated many of the foremost leaders of the Khilafat Committee and at a public meeting held in Calcutta they made bitter speeches and declared that the Khilafat Committee which interested itself in all issues affecting the Muslims would arrange for the protection of their rights. The equally bitter Hindus started their own campaign.

In my own province, there was a general deterioration in the political atmosphere. Maulvi Mohammed Shafi, who had a difference of opinion with Motilal Nehru, resigned from the Assembly and was re-elected as an Independent. Mazharul Haq, who felt miserable because of these happenings, convened a conference of Congress and Khilafat leaders at Chapra. After a discussion lasting several days, we decided not to allow things to drift but to work jointly to remove the prevailing bitterness and to improve the atmosphere. At the conference we were all impressed by Mazharul Haq's genuine nationalism and were convinced that we had in our midst a leader who was willing to sacrifice everything for Hindu-Muslim unity. In accordance with the decisions of the conference, Mazharul Haq, Maulvi Mohammed Shafi, Jagatnarain Lal, and I, accompanied by a few others, set out on a tour of the province.

The tour contributed a great deal to the improvement in the situation. The distinct change in the atmosphere was attributed to the leadership of Mazharul Haq and it was generally felt that Bihar was on its way to solving the Hindu-Muslim problem. The effect was evident in the elections which followed in November, for, many Muslims who stood as Congress candidates were returned. The relations between Mohammed Shafi and Motilal Nehru also improved.

While things were improving in Bihar, news came of differences between Motilal Nehru and Lala Lajpat Rai. This resulted in a new group formed by Lala Lajpat Rai and Pandit Malaviya. The candidates set up by this group for the elections opposed the Congress nominees also.

Jagatnarain Lal, a leading Congress worker in Bihar, was inclined towards Hindu *sangathan* (unity) and took part in the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha. As there was then no ban against a Congressman being a member of the Mahasabha — quite a number of Congressmen were actually its members — his activities were not considered unconstitutional. But when he joined the Malaviya group and, rejecting the Congress ticket, stood as a nominee of the new group, we were compelled to put up a candidate against him.

Several other Congressmen who had grievances against the party joined the Malaviya group. Nandan Prasad Narain Singh Sharma of Saran was one of them. Pandit Malaviya and Lajpat Rai toured our province while Motilal Nehru and other Congress leaders also began their campaign. I gave Motilal Nehru all the help I could in his efforts.

In the course of my election tour, I was one day going by car from Purulia to Ranchi. As it was the last day for the scrutiny of nominations, we were going rather fast in order to be in time in Ranchi. At a turning of the road, a buffalo cart suddenly came into view and the driver, in trying to avert a collision, lost control and the car collided against a tree. I received injuries on the head and the nose. The others also were injured. The car was damaged but we managed to drive on and arrived late at Ranchi. I continued my tour of Bihar after covering Chota Nagpur. After visiting Begusarai and Samastipur I proceeded to Sitamarhi in Muzaffarpur district. At this place, almost a week after the accident, I began to feel pain in my head. Attributing it to fatigue and a cold, I took some medicine and left the place. When on the next day I arrived at Patna, the pain became unbearable and I went to a doctor who, however, could not diagnose the trouble. Only when, a few days later, my face was swollen, was it traced to the injuries received in the accident. I had, therefore, to cancel the rest of my tour.

The electioneering took an ugly turn. Motilal Nehru was subjected to undignified attacks. At some places we saw posters with scurrilous cartoons. We denounced such methods in strong language. The effect of such campaigns was evident in the election results. The independent group lost heavily in Bihar and only a few of its candidates won, among whom

were Jagatnarain Lal and Nandan Prasad Narain Singh Sharma. Congressmen annexed most of the seats. But Jaleshwar Prasad, leader of the Swarajya Party in the Bihar Legislative Assembly, was defeated and Mazharul Haq, who had been persuaded by us to stand, tied with his rival and, when lots were drawn, he lost! In the Central Assembly elections also we were quite successful. Even where our candidates did not win, men with Congress sympathies succeeded.

Quite a number of Independents in the Bihar Assembly always sided with the Congress Party but in this election the position was not so clear. It was claimed by our opponents that although many Congress candidates had been returned, non-Congressmen would be able to form a ministry with the help of the nominated bloc. Some people reaped advantage by raising the bogey of communalism and casteism. Even some Congressmen could not rise above these tactics.

Sir Ganesh Dutta Singh, minister in the previous cabinet, contested from four constituencies, fearing defeat at the hands of the Congress. One of these constituencies was that of Begu-serai where a large number of voters were Bhoomihar Brahmins, to which community Sir Ganesh Dutta belonged. He was quite popular in his community. I visited the area during the election campaign. At a public meeting which was attended by Sir Ganesh Dutta, many good things were said of him. It was said that since he became a minister he had been spending only a small part of his salary on himself and that the balance was assigned to charitable purposes. It was true that he had established a charitable trust by donating a few lakhs of rupees, for which reason he inspired our respect and admiration. But the Congress had to oppose him since he did not agree to the Congress programme.

I told the audience that the Congress was a national organisation and that it could not take individuals into account. If Sir Ganesh Dutta was prepared to accept the Congress programme, we were ready to withdraw our candidate. I told his supporters that I would be extending my stay so that they could call Sir Ganesh Dutta for personal discussions and, if he accepted our conditions, I assured them of Congress support. The audience, most of which supported Sir Ganesh Dutta, appreciated my stand. But during my extended

stay in Beguserai none of these men ever returned to see me. Ultimately, seeing his chances were very slender, Sir Ganesh Dutta manoeuvred to get returned unopposed by persuading a candidate to withdraw in his favour in a constituency where the Congress had not put up a candidate.

It was my conviction that the differences between the Hindus and Muslims would not be confined to these two communities but would also extend to all the sects within these communities. The educated classes sought the loaves and fishes of office. It was quite natural then that the various caste groups among the Hindus should feel mutual jealousy and try to outmanoeuvre each other. The elections justified my misgivings. I then set down my views in an article which was published in the *Desh*. It was not liked by many. But in the light of my experience, I am convinced that such a situation cannot be avoided so long as we give preference to a community or a sect or a political group over the country as a whole. At least till the country was free, the only course before true patriots was not to feel tempted to accept any office of prominence or profit under the Government but to derive satisfaction from serving the people. For one who wants to serve the people, there is room in any walk of life. I have nothing but pity for the self-delusion of those who argue that some position in the Government is essential for rendering service to the people.

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Bihar Vidyapith and Propagation of Khadi

My principal preoccupation during this time was to collect funds for the Bihar Vidyapith and to look after the khadi organisational work. From the very beginning, people were generally indifferent to the Vidyapith and the tendency was accentuated later. It was surprising that some of the very people who had helped in its establishment were now antagonistic to it. The Vidyapith had been originally housed in a building on a monthly rental of Rs. 200. In order to cut down our expenditure, we moved the Vidyapith to the Sadaqat Ashram started by Mazharul Haq. To the buildings that were already there, we added a few more tenements in which all the teachers and students were accommodated.

I liked the new location immensely. But the strength of the institution began to decline as popular enthusiasm for this type of education was on the wane. On account of lack of finance, several of the affiliated schools had to close down. Even then in 1926 there were affiliated to the Vidyapith 9 high schools, 16 middle schools and 30 primary schools with 797, 1,285 and 1,019 students respectively on their rolls. The number of teachers was 79, 70 and 34 and the monthly expense incurred on these schools was respectively Rs. 1,950, Rs. 1,260 and Rs. 424. Some of these schools have managed to survive the hard times and exist even today. We considered the continuance of the Vidyapith very essential and tried to collect the necessary funds.

I had seen in Maharashtra several institutions being run on public subscription, though no single individual's subscription amounted to any large sum. Subscriptions were recovered by sending the annual reports of these institutions to a large number of people by V.P.P. We felt like trying a similar experiment in Bihar. After some effort, we enrolled members willing to pay an annual subscription of Rs. 5. People paying larger amounts were enrolled as life-members or trustees.

Unfortunately, people in our province were not in the habit o paying subscription regularly. Forms were filled, promises o payment were made but payments ceased after a year. It was very difficult to personally approach everyone every year for collecting subscriptions. Our plan thus failed and we had to collect money from different places. Only in Patna were there some regular payments. A gentleman, Bhagwan Das by name, donated some land to the Vidyapith and it fetched a regular income. Some time later, Gajadhar Prasad Sahu diverted some funds from his own trust to the Vidyapith. Thus the institution carried on in spite of financial difficulties.

We tried to attract scholars of repute to the Vidyapith. Ramdas Gaur, a famous scholar, came from Banaras. Highly qualified academicians came from Bengal. A reputed scholar of ancient Indian history, Jaichander Vidyalankar, joined the staff of the Vidyapith as a teacher in history. My acquaintance with him matured into intimacy and this association later on became one of the reasons for the founding of the Bharatiya Itihas Parishad. We tried to change the curriculum now and then with the object of turning out graduates who would not be mere scholars but genuine patriots and public workers. All this did not take us very far; the number of students continued to fall and the scope of national education remained necessarily confined to very narrow limits. Nevertheless, our students and teachers gave a good account of themselves in public life, particularly whenever the call of satyagraha came.

The other thing which claimed my attention at that time was the organisation of khadi work. I had my heart set on it from the very beginning. The work was started in Bihar in 1921 with the allocation of a handsome amount to the Bihar Provincial Committee from the Swaraj Fund. The Committee appointed oganisers in districts but neither the organisers nor the Committee members had any experience and the outcome was not very creditable.

Ram Binod Singh, a Congress worker, started work on his own, and he was given assistance by Acharya Kripalani. At a production centre at Madhubani they started producing good khadi. It was exported to other provinces where it began

to acquire a name for itself. On Acharya Kripalani's recommendation and my approval, Ram Binod Singh was granted a big loan by the Khadi Board.

On the other hand, the Provincial Committee could not show satisfactory results. They had merely expanded the work but there was neither technical knowledge nor commercial talent to draw upon. Therefore they always recorded losses. The whole thing was reorganised after the establishment of the All-India Charkha Sangh, of which I was the agent in Bihar. We closed down several depots, keeping open only such of them as were self-supporting. Those who joined the Sangh came under its strict discipline and this resulted in all-round improvement and an increase in the production and sale of khadi.

I visited these production centres generally once a year to supervise their work. I stayed for a day or two, sat in the depot, bought yarn and sold cotton, weighing them myself; supervised the weaving and assisted in the fixation of the price of the finished product. My own knowledge of khadi work grew and with it grew the realisation that the losses were entirely due to paucity of knowledge of the work. Our estimates of income and expenditure were subject to close scrutiny by the Secretary of the Charkha Sangh, Shanker Lal Banker and his office. Despite these precautions we sometimes suffered losses.

The policy of the Sangh was to make cheap khadi available to the people. We, therefore, tried to buy yarn at the cheapest rates, to pay the minimum wages to weavers and to spend as little as possible on the sale depots. Compared to the production of all the provincial branches, the khadi produced in Bihar was considered cheap and of good quality. The handspun Kokti variety was popular in other provinces and it made Bihar famous. We also started printing and dyeing but because of the inexperience of our sales-depot workers, the sale of khadi could not be placed on a proper footing, the accounts were always in a mess and, in spite of improvements in other directions, arrangements regarding distribution seldom worked satisfactorily.

When we started the work we had our office and the principal depot in Patna. This created difficulties but as most of the

workers lived in Patna we were reluctant to move the office. When Lakshmi Narain Sinha, Secretary of the Charkha Sangh, and I decided to expand the work and thought of moving the office to Muzaffarpur, we were opposed by our Patna friends. In view of the advantages, I stuck to the decision. We set up a number of huts at Akhara Ghat on the banks of the Gandaki to accommodate our workers and the workshop. It was a nice place and I often went to live there. Our godown and sales depot were located in rented buildings in the town. Our output increased a great deal. After some time we felt that even this arrangement was not satisfactory since the principal production centres were in Darbhanga district. Transport from Darbhanga to Muzaffarpur involved unnecessary expense. We decided to shift the main sales depot to Madhubani in Darbhanga district.

But Ram Binod Singh already had a depot there. To avoid unhealthy competition, therefore, we chose Pandaul as the field of our activities. Soon after, differences arose between Ram Binod Singh and his workers and his depot's output became less than that of the Charkha Sangh. Then we saw no harm in moving to Madhubani. It provided better scope for expansion and had better communications with other production centres. Our office and the principal sales depot were shifted to Madhubani.

In his tour of the province in 1925, Gandhiji collected funds for khadi work and the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. He had collected about Rs. 50,000. This was handed over to us and added to our capital it helped us in extending our activities.

One of the principal methods adopted by me to popularise khadi was the organising of exhibitions at various places. The Patna exhibition of which I have written earlier was one of the most successful of the series. The Bettiah exhibition was inaugurated by the manager of the Estate, H. C. Prior, I.C.S., successor to Rutherford. The exhibition at Motihari was opened by the Rev. J. Z. Hodge, a reputed missionary. The one I organised in Jamshedpur was a daring venture and was very successful. It called for courage to hold an exhibition of the spinning wheel and its products in an industrial town like Jamshedpur where the chimneys ever emitted smoke,

where molten iron flowed like a running river, and where giant slabs were rolled easily and quickly into rails. For the tiny *Takli* and the spinning wheel to demonstrate their prowess to the giant machines — it gave a strange sensation. But we did it and it went off quite well. Temple, a senior officer of the Tata firm and an engineer and the Town Administrator of Jamshedpur, opened the exhibition. The General Manager of the company, Keynen, and Mrs. Keynen, Americans, visited the exhibition and bought khadi. Many officers of the company flocked to the exhibition and the sale of goods was brisk. The exhibition was such a success that we had to open another in another part of the town.

Many more exhibitions were organised in Bihar towns that year, opened by prominent citizens and sometimes by me. These helped not only to further our propaganda but also to clear our accumulated stocks.

I learnt that Gandhiji was suffering from high blood pressure and had gone to the Nandi Hills in Mysore State for rest. I went there and stayed with him for a few days. It was a fascinating place, though climbing the hills was rather tiring despite the fact that my asthma was not then quite so acute. Later I accompanied Gandhiji to Bangalore where a big khadi exhibition, the first of its kind in Mysore State, had been organised, with the Tamil Nad and the Andhra branches of the Charkha Sangh participating in it.

An interesting development was taking place in the south — the progress of Hindi. A special conference was called in Bangalore where certificates were awarded to candidates successful in the examinations held by the Hindi Prachar Sabha. For the first time I saw the great enthusiasm for Hindi in a non-Hindi-speaking area. We found husband and wife, mother and daughter and father and son learning and taking the examination together.

Then I went to Tiruppur, where the Tamil Nad Charkha Sangh had its principal depot, and Thiruchengode in Salem district, where Rajagopalachari had started an ashram and where valuable khadi work was being done. I studied the production and organisational methods at these centres and tried to introduce them in our province. I particularly liked their accounting system. Among khadi producers, Tamil

Nad topped the list, whereas in respect of fine cloth (excepting *kokti*) Andhra was ahead of other provinces.

On the request of Sita Ram Shastri, Secretary of the Andhra Charkha Sangh, I visited several Andhra centres and made speeches there, trying as best as I could to explain the economy and utility of khadi. These speeches appeared to have made some impression on the educated people who were generally sceptical about khadi. When I later returned to Patna, Andhra Congressmen informed me that they thought that my speeches would prove helpful in their work and requested me to publish them in a book form. I followed their advice and published a collection of my Andhra speeches under the title, *Economics of Khadi* in English. A Hindi translation was also published later.

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A Tour of Assam and the Gauhati Congress

SOME friends from Assam had met me during the Kanpur session of the Congress and proposed that the next session should be held in their province. Among them was Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, with whom I became friends while practising at the Calcutta High Court. He had joined the non-co-operation movement at its early stages and was one of the foremost leaders of the province. I advised him and his friends against their move, having my experience of the Gaya session in my mind. Assam is a small and poor province and it would have difficulties, I felt, in raising funds and providing all the facilities for a Congress session. Further, the Congress province of Assam was confined to the Assamese-speaking Brahmaputra Valley, the Bengali-speaking Surma Valley being joined to Bengal, and was, therefore, smaller than the administrative unit of Assam province. There was a shortage of Congress workers there. But their enthusiasm made up for the lack of numbers and there was no stopping them. They made the invitation to the A.-I.C.C. and it was accepted. It was decided to hold the session in Gauhati.

These people also desired to organise the khadi industry before the Gauhati session. Therefore, they asked for my help and I could not refuse it. Soon afterwards, I undertook a tour of Assam and visited those districts which offered a good scope for the khadi industry. The visit was most pleasing. Assam offers unique opportunities for khadi work. Rearing of silk worms and preparing and spinning of silk yarn are part of an old tradition there. Weaving is just as natural an occupation for Assamese women as sewing or other household work. In fact, it is considered a necessary attainment for marriageable girls. The Assamese have made a fine art of weaving and make excellent saris in beautiful coloured designs. Almost every house has its loom, made of bamboo. They are also adepts at spinning.

I had a pleasant surprise when women came to Khadi bhandars to exchange cloth for cotton just as in Darbhanga

people exchanged yarn for cotton. The main reason was that whereas in Darbhanga and elsewhere we supplied cotton, got it spun into yarn and then handed it over to weavers, in Assam, spinning and weaving were done under the same roof.

Cotton of ordinary quality is also grown in some parts of the province. Therefore, I found Assam almost an ideal province for the propagation of khadi. On my return from the tour, I wrote to the Secretary of the All-India Charkha Sangh insisting on substantial aid to the province for encouraging the khadi industry. Although from past experience the Secretary was unwilling to extend such assistance, the Council of the Sangh accepted my advice and sent funds to the province.

In my tour of Assam I found large tracts of uncultivated land in Nowgong district. There were no signs of human habitation for miles around, except a few huts here and there. There was no shortage of water and the land was covered with green foliage. There was no sign of the land ever having been ploughed. I was told that there was plenty of such land in the province and, according to the law of the land, anyone who brought the land under the plough and settled there became the owner.

The adjoining Mymensingh district of Bengal (now in East Pakistan) is a thickly populated area. Many Muslim families migrated from Mymensingh to Nowgong and settled on the land and when they began cultivation became its owners. As more and more unused land came under the plough, the ratio of the Muslim population began to rise.

When I heard of all this, I had an idea. Chapra is one of the most densely populated districts of Bihar and its people generally have to go out of the province in search of work every year. Thousands of them go to Assam and work as labourers and after earning some money return to their homes. They never thought of settling down in Assam. I saw Biharis and men from Chapra almost everywhere in Assam. I thought that if, instead of just going to Assam to earn something and returning to Chapra, they permanently settled down on the land there, not only would their future be assured but also the pressure on land would be reduced in Chapra.

I sounded the Assamese on this subject and they welcomed it. They told me that they liked the Bihari labourers and did

not like the people of Mymensingh, whose treatment of the local population was far from satisfactory. Some thought it better to have the Hindus of Bihar than the Muslims of Mymensingh. The communal feeling was uppermost in men's minds then and Assam was no exception. They welcomed the idea also because by themselves the Assamese were unable to bring the land under the plough. But the influx of Muslims from Mymensingh was upsetting the population ratio and the Assamese wanted to retain a majority in the Brahmaputra Valley. The influx from Mymensingh could be countered only by allowing Bihar Hindus to settle down on the land.

On my return I spoke about this matter to some of my friends in Bihar, but no one seemed to be interested. As far as I know, only a few Biharis have settled on the land in Assam.

My brother, whom I had informed of this, went to Assam after a few years to see the land. He liked it and besides settling down on virgin land he thought of buying some cultivated land as well. A Bengali gentleman purchased jointly with Shambhu Saran and Anugrah Narain Sinha a thousand acres of land from the previous owner. The land included an orange orchard with a bungalow in it. The farm had also a tractor. But the land was in the midst of a forest infested with wild animals. Bullocks were purchased and arrangements were made to cultivate the land, but the climate was so bad that anyone who stayed there was stricken with malaria, which seemed to be the reason why the previous owner had been in a hurry to sell the farm. Shambhu Saran, Anugrah Narain and my brother went there several times to start ploughing operations, but a prolonged stay there was impossible. Once my brother visited the farm and returned with malaria. The illness weakened him considerably and was ultimately to kill him. Meanwhile Shambhu Saran had died. No one else had any enthusiasm left for the venture. We just left the land and came back home. Probably the farm was auctioned later for the realisation of the land revenue. We suffered a loss of several thousands of rupees in this venture.

For the Gauhati Congress presidentship the name of Mazharul Haq had been suggested by many. Bihar was very eager to see him elected. But he announced that he was not a candidate for the honour. His refusal was in keeping with his lofty

idealism and utter humility. He was preoccupied, he said, with working for Hindu-Muslim unity in his province and his election to the high office would stand in the way of that work. Many of us did not accept this logic but it was a personal matter and we did not press the issue. After his withdrawal and that of Dr. Ansari, S. Srinivasa Iyengar was unanimously elected President.

Tarunram Phookan and N. C. Bardoloi were the Chairman and Secretary respectively of the Congress Reception Commitee and they put in hard work to make the session a success. A nice little township arose on the banks of the Brahmaputra and the Congress Nagar was a fascinating sight. The khadi industry had made enormous strides, thanks to the help of the Charkha Sangh, and the Khadi Exhibition was a great success.

A few days before the session, Swami Shraddhanand had been stabbed to death in his house in Delhi by a Muslim. The outrage deeply stirred the Hindus and its shadow could not but fall on the Congress session. What pained Hindus most was that Maulana Mohammed Ali also associated himself with the defence of the murderer. They interpreted it to mean that the Maulana was in sympathy with the culprit. The only 'reason' for the murder was that for several years Swami Shraddhanand had been taking great interest in the *Shuddhi* (conversion) and Sangathan movements. Incidents such as this vitiated the political atmosphere in the country and the visions of unity and harmony we had in 1921 had now completely disappeared.

The Congress session was not marked by anything spectacular. Although Gandhiji participated in the session, he remained somewhat aloof since he had entrusted all political work to the Swarajya Party. However, there was one interesting incident which I recall. The Maharaja of Nabha in the Punjab had been deposed and some of his followers had requested the Congress to adopt a resolution denouncing the Government's action and to devise some means of helping the deposed ruler. The Subjects Committee passed a resolution. Gandhiji, who had been absent, did not approve of it when he heard of it later and objected to Congress entangling itself in the affairs of the Indian States. He insisted on the Subjects Committee reconsidering the resolution and it was consequently

never moved. B. G. Horniman, Editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*, who had come as a Congress delegate from Bombay, expressed great dissatisfaction with this development. He urged reconsideration of the question but nothing happened. I was not conversant with Indian States' affairs then and so was not able to understand the matter fully. For several years, the question continued to come up before the Congress and created a great deal of controversy.

At every session since the Ahmedabad Congress, efforts were regularly made to change the Congress objective from dominion status to complete independence. S. Srinivasa Iyengar was a supporter of complete independence and the demand therefore gained greater momentum. But the resolution did not have enough supporters to be passed by the session.

It rained very heavily while the session was on but the proceedings continued uninterrupted. The rain only resulted in increased expenditure and a fall in gate money. The Reception Committee suffered a heavy loss and, though the A.-I.C.C. came to its rescue, the deficit was not wiped out and Phookan and Bardoloi were the sufferers. The fears I had expressed to Bardoloi came true.

The most important development in the Central Assembly was the election of Vithalbhai Patel as Speaker. Able and brilliant, he was the greatest Speaker India has ever seen. Fair and impartial as he was, he put the Government on the spot several times. The legislative work got great publicity in the newspapers and was well received by the people. Srinivasa Iyengar was also a member of the Central Assembly and he came to have a difference of opinion with Motilal Nehru, but the differences, however, never came to a head.

Srinivasa Iyengar as Congress President laid emphasis on finding a solution to the communal problem which was getting more and more complicated. Things had come to such a pass that one could discern the feeling of mutual distrust even among Congressmen. Analysing the question, Iyengar said that it had two aspects, religious and political. The masses, he said, were interested in the religious aspect while the educated and the moneyed classes were interested in the political aspect. Those interested in the political aspect took advantage of

the common people's beliefs. He said that these two different aspects called for different solutions.

Hindus revere the cow. The very mention of cow slaughter is enough to incite them. Many riots in U.P. and Bihar were the result of this feeling. The Muslim rulers knew that the killing of cows injured the feelings of the Hindus and the liberal-minded among them banned cow slaughter in their States. The Muslims consider it their duty to sacrifice animals on the occasion of Id. Because it is less expensive, the poor cow comes in for sacrifice. The trouble generally starts where there is no practice of cow slaughter and an effort is made by some new-rich and ambitious or religious Muslim to start it. The Government of Bihar, therefore, had prepared a list of places where cow sacrifice had been in vogue for some time and in such places they suppressed Hindu resistance while they prohibited the Muslims from starting the sacrifice at new places. The Muslims objected to this policy on the plea that the list was incorrect as the sacrifice was never done openly and the fact of the sacrifice could be established only by Muslim witnesses. The Hindus and the Government did not place any reliance on these witnesses. The Muslims then said that they had a right to observe their religious practices and the question of convention did not arise.

The Muslims opposed the playing of music and the passing of processions with bands in front of mosques as these disturbed their prayers. Some riots did occur because of this in Bihar, though Patna, thanks to Muslim leaders here, was never affected by this issue. The Hindus said that this was altogether a new demand made to counter the Hindus' demand for ban on cow sacrifice.

But the simple facts were overlooked by people. Innumerable cows are slaughtered daily in slaughter houses either for the sake of their meat or for their hides. In cantonment areas like Calcutta where British forces were stationed, even milch cattle were not spared. But the Hindus never paid any attention to it. They put up with the daily slaughter of the cow but found it hard to tolerate the killing of the cow on the Id day. Similarly, in big cities there is a perpetual din, the noise of tram cars and vehicular traffic, on all sides of the mosques and, during Moharrum, Muslims themselves take out noisy

processions with bands playing, but they only objected to religious processions of the Hindus. However, this was a thorny problem and it was in that that the common people were interested.

Among the educated classes the question was one of fighting for the loaves and fishes of office. If in the public services, local bodies and councils, the Muslims did not get enough representation, they started agitating. The Hindus, on the other hand, got excited if the Muslims secured more representation than their population ratio warranted.

Srinivasa Iyengar was keen on solving these problems. The solutions he suggested were not feasible. The people of the south could not place themselves in the position of the Hindus in the north whose feelings on this question they could not properly appreciate. In the south, the Hindu-Muslim problem is not as live an issue as in the north. There the trouble arises between Brahmins and non-Brahmins and caste-Hindus and untouchables. Nothing was heard of any trouble on the question of cow slaughter. Disturbances occurred in the south on the issue of music, but the people who opposed the playing of music were not the Muslims but the Christians.

Srinivasa Iyengar was quick to come to conclusions. He formed his opinions as quickly as he spoke and once he formed an opinion he never liked to revise it. An intelligent man, he was not a practical type. He would beat anyone where mere logic and theoretical knowledge of law were concerned, but when it came to practical application, his talents were not of much avail. During his tenure of office as President, he tried hard to solve the Hindu-Muslim tangle, but what he considered the right solution was not acceptable to Congress Hindus, let alone Hindus in general. His efforts, therefore, bore no fruit.

57
Simon Commission and the Madras Congress

When the new constitutional reforms were instituted in 1920, one of the provisos was that after ten years the British Parliament would review the working of the reforms and, if necessary, appoint a commission to report on it. In the elections that were held under the new Constitution, the Congress, as a party, contested only in 1926 and came out victorious, but the Constitution was such that the Congress or popular representatives could never be in a majority in the Councils. In spite of sweeping the polls, they found that the official and nominated members in most places managed to secure a majority. In the Central Assembly, however, the elected members were often able to defeat the Government. This probably led the Government to think that somethig ought to be done to remove the prevailing discontent among the people. So, without waiting for the stipulated ten-year period to elapse, the British Government announced in 1927 the appointment of a Commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon. All the members on the Commission were Englishmen but it could co-opt Indians as advisory members in every province. The Commission was to start its inquiry in India in the beginning of 1928. The announcement raised a countrywide protest. Hindus and Muslims were at one on this issue, and it seemed as if once again united opposition to Britain would be possible.

An all-party conference was convened in Patna under the presidentship of Sir Ali Imam to consider the question. The conference decided that all parties should put up a joint front under Sir Ali's leadership and boycott the Commission. Felicitating Sir Ali, I expressed satisfaction at the fact that men of liberal views like him who held responsible positions under the Government had come forward to oppose the Commission and added that, if all of us worked jointly, the boycott would be a complete success. But while to Sir Ali

and men of his way of thinking, boycott meant refusal to give evidence before the Commission or render any other help to it, to us it meant something more than that. We wanted to associate the people with the boycott and that was possible only if the boycott also took the form of a demonstration. I told Sir Ali that he and his followers might content themselves with abstaining from giving evidence before the Commission, but that we would enable popular discontent to express itself through demonstrations. Although Sir Ali, who never favoured public demonstrations, did not like my proposal, because of his strong opposition to the Commission, he accepted it.

What happened in Bihar happened elsewhere in the country. All were opposed to the all-white Commission and the non-inclusion of Indians was taken as an insult to the nation. Determination to boycott the Commission was almost unanimous. But there is no dearth in India of men who would always be willing to support the British on any issue. On this occasion also the Government was able to get such men as were ready to serve as advisory members on the Commission or give evidence before it. But it was gratifying to see that none from any political party came forward to co-operate with the Commission.

Meanwhile, we had the Congress session in Madras in December 1927, with Dr. Ansari as President. The Simon Commission's visit loomed large at the session. Feeling that the boycott was not enough, the Congress decided to appoint a committee to frame, in collaboration with other parties, a constitution for India. The idea was not to place the new draft constitution before the Commission but to place the demands of all the political parties before the people and with their support compel the British to accept them sooner or later.

A resolution in favour of complete independence in preference to dominion status as the goal of the Congress was moved in the session. On the strong support of Jawaharlal Nehru, who had just returned from a tour of Europe, the resolution was approved by the Subjects Committee. I opposed the resolution because I thought that we should not adopt anything for the implementation of which we were not prepared. There was, at that time, hardly any preparation or

enthusiasm in the country which could help us achieve the objective of complete independence. Nevertheless, the Congress voted in favour of it, but it remained a mere resolution till two years later at the Lahore session it was incorporated in the Congress constitution as the goal of the Congress.

The Subjects Committee also accepted a resolution on Hindu-Muslim unity to be moved before the open session. The resolution conceded the right of cow sacrifice to the Muslims provided it was done in private. This is exactly what Srinivasa Iyengar had asked for before and now it had taken the shape of a resolution. I thought that, irrespective of its propriety, the resolution would never be acceptable to the Hindus as such and that if Muslims exercised this right there would be large-scale riots in the country. I thought the resolution was harmful to the country and spoke to Gandhiji who had not been present in the Subjects Committee when it was passed. He attended the next meeting of the Committee and, at his instance, the resolution was reconsidered and modified to make it acceptable to all sections of the people. Many of our Muslim friends disliked the revision of the resolution. The result was that the gulf which existed between the communities widened all the more.

58
A Visit to Ceylon

My wife, my brother's wife and other members of my family had accompanied me to Madras. On our way we had alighted at Rajahmundry to have a dip in the Godavari. My family wanted to visit Rameshwaram and other pilgrim centres in South India and so, after the Congress session, accompanied by some friends of mine, we visited Madurai, Rameshwaram and other places. Leaving my family in Rameshwaram, with a few friends I proceeded to Ceylon. My intention was to see Damodar Das, an active Congress worker in Chapra for many years, who was studying Buddhist literature in an educational institution at Kelaniya. He taught Sanskrit and had studied the Tripitakas in Pali. He was later to become famous as a Buddhist Bhiku under the name of Rahul Sankrityayan.

Damodar Das hired a bus and arranged our tour of some of the principal places of interest in the island. We were enchanted by the lush green forests and the natural beauty of the landscape. We visited the Grand Temple in Kandy and from there went to Nuwara Eliya where we spent a night. Our next place of halt was Seetaeliya. According to tradition, it is here that Ravana was supposed to have kept Sita in detention in Asoka Batika. Nuwara Eliya is on top of a hill while Seetaeliya is below. Surrounded by mountains all round, Seetaeliya is situated at the base of a bowl, a perfect setting. A small temple, with a spring near it, marks the place of Sita's detention. As we came down on the winding roads from Nuwara Eliya to Seetaeliya, the view of the widespread forest of Raktashok was magnificent. The hills were of different formations, some of stone, some of chalk. One of the hills had a top layer, about three feet wide, of ash colour. Digging through we found it to be ash. We were then reminded of the story in the *Ramayan* of Hanuman setting Lanka on fire.

After seeing many beauty spots, including ancient caves with fascinating mural paintings, we arrived at Anuradhapura, where stands a famous stupa. When we arrived, it was nine

in the night. A religious meeting of Buddhists was in progress under a peepal tree. A Bhiku was delivering a sermon. It was an impressive sight but we could not understand the sermon except for the interjections of the listeners who uttered the word " Sadho " repeatedly. We were told that the tree under which the Bhiku was delivering his sermon was the one planted by Mahendra, son of Asoka, who had brought a sapling of the Mahabodhi tree from Gaya centuries ago. I should rather think that this peepal tree is only an offshoot of the one Mahendra planted just as the Mahabodhi tree which we see in Gaya today is only an offshoot of the tree under which the Buddha gained his enlightenment. But one thing that thrilled us was the fact that the earthen lamp which was burning there is the same one that Mahendra lit when he was in Anuradhapura and that the Buddhists have kept it burning for the last 2,300 years. If this is true, the lamp at Anuradhapura is unique and the oldest in the world.

After the Ceylon tour, we returned to Rameshwaram from where we started on another tour of pilgrim centres of the south on our way to Bihar. On our arrival at Chapra, we learnt that my brother had undergone an operation. As he was a diabetic, the wound took time to heal. On one occasion, his condition had been critical but as we were always on the move there was no way of communicating with us. Luckily, the critical phase had passed off by the time we returned, and he was on the way to recovery.

59
A Voyage to England

THE Maharaja of Dumraon filed an appeal in the Privy Council in the Burma Case. Rai Bahadur Hari Prasad Sinha wanted me to go to London to assist his senior counsel and, as I was committed to seeing his case through, I agreed. The opportunity to see Europe was an additional reason for my acceptance.

My nephew, Janardan, had just returned from England after his training in metallurgy and had secured employment with Tatas at Jamshedpur. On his and some other friends' advice, I ordered a woollen outfit for my trip to Europe. Being a habitual wearer of khadi, I bought Kashmiri woollen cloth from the Khadi Bhandar and got clothes prepared in the Indian style. I had decided not to wear western style clothes. This has a double advantage. English style suits involve adherence to certain conventions and are very costly. By sticking to the national dress I could keep to my ways and habits and would be under no obligation to comply with the social conventions of the west. Besides, it was so much cheaper and none in the west could detect its defects, even if it happened to have any. I have looked at clothes merely as a means of covering the body and protecting it against heat and cold. It was difficult for me to change my outlook and habits.

Rai Bahadur Hari Prasad Sinha was very zealous regarding my comfort during the trip. He wanted me to take a servant with me and insisted that I should always travel first class. All this was considered unnecessary by my friends who had been to England, but he would have none of it. I, therefore, took Govardhan with me. I left my home early in March 1928, on an auspicious day fixed by Hariji's astrologers and reached Bombay. From there I went to Sabarmati to take Gandhiji's blessings. I sailed by the S.S. KAISER-I-HIND and was seen off in Bombay by my brother.

I had not had many contacts with people who lived in the western style. Before leaving Patna, Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha

invited me for a meal which was served on a table in the western style. For the first time I learnt the art of using a knife and fork.

During the voyage, the sea was very calm and I did not have any sea-sickness. Being reserved by nature, I never introduced myself to anyone on the ship. I spent my time either in a deck chair reading or strolling on the promenade deck. A Parsi gentleman, who occupied a cabin next to mine, was my solitary acquaintance on that ship. He was going to Europe for sight-seeing. I saw some of the other passengers looking at me and my Indian dress with undisguised curiosity.

When we had been two days at sea, an Englishman, who was a member of the Indian Medical Service, came to me and started conversing with me. He had retired from service and had come back to India as a member of some commission. He had finished his assignment and was now returning home, accompanied by his wife. They were a good-natured couple. Their only regret was that they were unable to see Gandhiji though they had very much wanted to. When in the course of the conversation they heard of my connection with Gandhiji, their interest in me heightened. The Englishman was pleasantly surprised when he heard that I was a vegetarian and told me that he was one himself. In turn, he surprised me by saying that it was difficult for a vegetarian to remain so in India because, he said, he could not get enough to eat in India, whereas in Europe and America, where there were a number of vegetarians, there were plenty of vegetables, milk and milk products. Eggs were also considered vegetarian diet in the west. The couple cautioned me that while in England, if I visited a vegetarian restaurant, I should say that I did not touch eggs as otherwise vegetarian dishes containing eggs would be served to me. They added that biscuits and pastry without eggs were not easily available but if a dealer told me that what he offered me did not contain eggs I should believe him since eggs being expensive it was in his interest to tell the truth. Tips like this were very useful. During my stay in England, I was able to manage without any change in my way of living.

When the ship was passing through the Suez Canal I heard that Thomas Cooks arranged short trips for passengers

to Cairo and other places of historical interest. So early one morning we left the ship by car for Cairo. We visited the Museum which has valuable collections excavated from the pyramids. The dead bodies or mummies of the ancient and powerful kings of Egypt are still preserved there. The bodies have turned black, but their faces and hands are still lifelike. The fine cloth in which their bodies are wrapped is still intact and I was surprised to learn that this extremely fine cloth was imported from India. The ancient Egyptians believed that if one were buried along with the things necessary for one's comfort one would have a comfortable time in the next life. Therefore, all the requirements of daily use were buried inside the pyramids with the bodies of the kings. The articles included shoes, furniture, eatables, toilet accessories, ornaments, chariots and even boats, all of the best quality, some of gold, and all remarkably well preserved. I was told that wheat recovered from the excavations at Mohenjodaro (now in West Pakistan) germinated on sowing.

Then we visited ancient monuments and places of historical importance in the city. Although Cairo is an ancient city, the parts which we saw were modern and recently built. Arabic is the language of Egypt and, among the European languages, French is current there.

In the afternoon after riding some distance on camels we reached the pyramids. These are square-based stone structures, very much like Indian brick-kilns, with a wide base and a tapering top, only much bigger. I have an impression that each brick-like stone piece is four to five cubits long and proportionately wide and thick. It must have taken days to cut and chisel each block. To think that thousands and thousands of men must have toiled most of their lives and that ages were spent in erecting these mountain-like structures just to perpetuate names which nobody remembers now and then to remember that, though the pyramids stand today as they were constructed thousands of years ago they are of no use to anybody, makes one sad.

We then took a train to Port Said and when we reached there about eleven in the night we found our ship already docked. After an uneventful journey, we reached Marseilles.

After a day of sightseeing, I left for Paris in the evening. The next evening I was in London, travelling *via* Calais and Dover. Though it was the third week of March, it was pretty cold. A friend came to meet me at the station from where we went to our apartments in Golders Green. Two other Indian lawyers, Mahavir Prasad and Kunwar Bahadur, had already arrived there. With Govardhan to take care of me I got the food I was used to and I felt quite at home.

I got to work the very next day, within 12 hours of my arrival in London, and for four months had an extremely busy time. By nine in the morning, when people generally get up there, I would have already put in two hours of work. Finishing breakfast, I would go to the library and pore over books till 1 p.m. when I would go to a nearby restaurant for lunch. From there I would go straight to the court where I would work up to four and then take the tube train and go home. After dinner, I would often go out for a stroll and on return would work a little more before going to bed. Sometimes, when discussions had to be held with the lawyers, my programme underwent a slight change. When Hari Prasad Sinha arrived in London, we shifted to his quarters in Hyde Park.

One of our senior counsels, Luxmoore, had gone to his country house near Hythe for the Easter holidays. We had told him that the case was very complicated and, if he agreed, one of us could go to him to help him study the brief. With some reluctance, he agreed and I went to Hythe. His residence was eight miles from Hythe and I used to go there in his car which he sent every morning to fetch me. We started at 9-30 and worked till 4-30 p.m., with only an hour's break for lunch and half an hour for tea. Then I motored back to Hythe. I thus spent 15 days with the Luxmoores and became very friendly with them.

Our first counsel was Upjohn. Though over seventy-five, he was quite healthy and could put in hard work even at that age. All the papers connected with the case came to 15,000 pages in print. Sometimes, we could hardly get three or four lines relevant to our case after wading through 25 or 30 printed pages. We had prepared our brief in Patna and thought that if we read out the relevant portions of all the

papers to our counsel it would be of great help and would save time. Though Luxmoore had agreed, Upjohn would not. We offered a special fee, Rs. 85 per hour for sitting down to study a case along with others as was the custom in India. Hariji wanted the 15,000 pages studied this way, but Upjohn would have none of it. He said the fee he had charged us was not merely for appearing in the court to argue the case but also for studying the case properly. He thought that it was his duty to study the papers himself, as he could not possibly argue the case without knowing the facts. He, therefore, did not agree to take any special fee and insisted on doing everything himself. He said he would ask for help when necessary. Further we were told that it was not customary in London for a lawyer to study the papers of a case along with others, although others might be called for consultation when a separate fee would be charged.

This worried Hariji a great deal. He thought that an old man like Upjohn would not be able to wade through all those pages single-handed, particularly when the case was a complicated one and relevant material was mixed with quite a lot of irrelevant references. When we told him that he would have to waste much of his time in going through useless material, Upjohn said he would read each and every word. He contended that since he was to argue the case he was in the best position to judge what was useful and what was irrelevant. After going through the entire literature, he might ask for help from others, if needed. That was his last word on the subject and we could not say anything further. Hariji also kept quiet, but he could not cease being anxious.

According to the procedure of the Privy Council, both sides were required to put up their cases in writing, which was known as presenting the case. The brief had to be prepared very carefully so as to avoid all irrelevant matters, not admitting of arguments. As the brief of the other side was not usually available till the presentation of the case, possible arguments of the other side had to be anticipated and met. When we saw our brief prepared by Upjohn all of us, including Hariji, were convinced that Upjohn had understood each and every point of the case. This integrity and efficient work impressed me very much. I am sorry to say I have not seen

legal work in our country coming anywhere near this standard.

I became intimate with Upjohn in a rather peculiar way. Seeing my Indian dress, he thought I was a relative of Hariji who had just come to see the case through. He did not take me to be a lawyer. In the course of consultations, he put some questions to which I gave a correct and succinct reply. He looked at me in a curious way and said nothing. Later, when one of our lawyers who used to visit him in his chambers met him, Upjohn told him that his client appeared to be very intelligent and that he gave good replies to his questions. My colleague pointed out that I was not the client but a lawyer who had given up practice. This increased Upjohn's curiosity and he became more interested.

Upjohn gave me quite a lot of work to do later on and I prepared several notes for him. When the hearing approached he asked me if I would like to be present in the court at that time. When I replied in the affirmative, he said it would be much better if I could utilise my time in preparing the many notes for him at home, but if I found time to attend the court after preparing the notes, he had no objection. Preparation of notes, however, was to receive priority and he would not tolerate, he said, any delay in submission of the notes in due time.

Upjohn had the reputation of being a short-tempered man and often had wordy duels with the opposition counsel or his own colleagues and sometimes even with the judges. I was, therefore, very cautious in my dealings with him, but I saw that my notes fully satisfied him and we had no trouble at all.

Another thing which I saw in London deserves the notice of Indian lawyers. When I practised in Calcutta, I used to find that when we were not actually appearing before the judges, most of our time was wasted. We did very little by way of reading or studying our cases while sitting in the Bar Association or library. We prepared our briefs only at home. In the court, except for the lawyer who was arguing the case, other lawyers wasted their time in gossip. But in London I saw that lawyers did quite a lot of their job in the Bar Association libraries or in their chambers. They came to the

court-room only a few minutes before the opening of the case. Whenever they were free they were again at work. They think that the home is a place of recreation where one should spend one's time with wife and children. If one must read at home, it is not the professional books that should be read but recreational literature. They prefer their chambers and the library for their professional work. They make the best use of the day for work, reserving the morning and evening for anything else they might like to do.

Most of the lawyers went out to the country for the week-end. Upjohn went straight to the railway station from the court on Fridays and took a train to his country house 70 miles away and returned to London on Sunday evenings. We wanted Upjohn to stay in London throughout the week as long as the case was pending because we thought that we would be able to discuss with him at length on Saturdays and Sundays. We told him that he could charge his usual fees for those days also. He did not agree and the offer of additional fees could not tempt him to change his routine. He replied that he would not be able to work well for five days in the week if he did not spend the week-end in the country. "Would it be possible for me to work at this age if I do not conform to this rule?" he asked. He asked me to convey to Hariji that by remaining in London throughout the week he would be less useful to him.

We, the lawyers, had an impression that our case was very strong and that we were bound to win. Upjohn thought that we would not have to say much by way of argument. Our opponents' arguments continued for about 20 days and it was likely to last another month or more, but the courts were about to close for three months. This would have meant that the case would come up again before the court in October and might go on till December. The thought of a winter stay in England appalled Hariji. So, when he got an opportunity, he started compromise talks without consulting any of us. We came to know about it only when the settlement had to be reduced to writing. We could say nothing as Hariji's mind was made up. The terms of compromise were drawn up and the case was compounded suddenly one evening in the last week of July.

Upjohn had asked me not to give up law and had said that he would have a full talk about it some time later. As the case suddenly concluded and I had to leave for Europe immediately thereafter, this talk could not take place.

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Tour of Europe and No-War Conference

Two days after our case was settled, a No-War Conference was to be held in Santagsburg, near Vienna, under the presidentship of Fenner Brockway. I was greatly interested in the subject and as Tarniprasad Singh of Bihar, who had been living in London for some years, also persuaded me to attend the conference, I made up my mind to go to Austria. Along with a Punjabi friend, I left London and reached Vienna 24 hours later.

Santagsburg, the venue of the conference, was a small village perched on a hill, with a church at its crest — an ideal location for our deliberations. The conference was attended by delegates from Germany, Austria, France, England, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Palestine and other countries. The number of delegates was not very large, but all of them were active workers in the cause of peace. Many of them had suffered imprisonment or persecution because of their anti-war activities.

I was naturally the object of some attention when the delegates learnt that I was a close associate of Gandhiji. They put me a number of questions about Gandhiji and his method of work. Their interest had redoubled because the Bardoli Satyagraha was going on in India then and they had heard about it. They asked me to address the conference and in my speech I confined myself to the Champaran satyagraha. I explained how Mahatma Gandhi's weapon of non-violence was used with success.

The proceedings of the conference were conducted in four languages, English, French, German and Esperanto. It was a delight to watch in action a young German interpreter who knew all the four languages so well that he could take down the speeches in all the four languages in shorthand and, with the notes before him, translate each of them in the other three languages.

An anti-war resolution was adopted at the conference which lasted three days. It was resolved that the delegates should visit some places and do anti-war propaganda.

Not far from Santagsburg was the town of Gratz where a doctor named Standenath lived with his wife. He was a lecturer in the local Medical College. Although the couple had never visited India, they used to exchange letters with Gandhiji. The Mahatma had given me a letter to be delivered to them in case I went to Austria. When I told the conference officials of my desire to go to Gratz they decided that Runham Brown, an Englishman, the secretary of the conference, and some other delegates should accompany me to Gratz where we should do anti-war propaganda.

We reached Gratz at 5 in the evening. Dr. Standenath and his wife were at the railway station. I took leave of my friends and went along with Dr. Standenath to his residence. After some refreshments, we left for a meeting to be held at 7 p.m. at a place nearby. The meeting place was a big hall which could accommodate about 500 persons. Chairs and tables were arranged as in a restaurant, with wine glasses for each one. The hall was filled with fumes because almost everyone was smoking. At the other end was a dais, a wooden platform, with a table and a few chairs. Nearby was an exit which was closed. As we entered the hall, people started looking at me and took me to be one of those who had come to address the gathering. Someone asked me if I would speak in German and I replied that I knew only English.

We had hardly reached the centre of the hall when the silence was broken by shouts. My hosts told me that they were caused by the people who opposed the anti-war propaganda. We went up the dais and Dr. Standenath tried to open the exit door which was bolted, when we were all of a sudden set upon by a score of men, attacking us with their bare fists. My hosts placed themselves between me and the assailants, receiving most of the blows on themselves. The assailants then broke the chairs which were on the dais and began to use the broken fragments to assault us with renewed vigour. I was injured in the head and was at a loss to know why I was the object of their violent attention. I jumped on to the floor and my hosts followed me. The attack ceased. None of those who were sitting round the tables got up. We retreated towards the entrance through silent spectators. Only one woman got up and followed us. Outside she spoke to Dr.

Standenath, consoling us. We all reached home bleeding profusely. The doctor dressed my wounds and bandaged my head, treated his wife and then attended to himself. They spoke very little English and were not able to express themselves well.

I was told the assailants were against the anti-war campaign and wanted to prevent us from speaking. I wondered what had happened to those who had accompanied me from Santagsburg. Later I learnt that they had been standing outside the hall, waiting for us. When they learnt about what had happened inside and heard that we had gone away, they left the place. Next morning, with a bandaged head, I left for Vienna.

Dr. Standenath wrote to Gandhiji, who published a full account of the Gratz incident in *Young India.*

From Vienna I proceeded to Switzerland, desirous of seeing Romain Rolland. From his sister I learnt that to escape from the heat he had gone to the Cartigi Hills, where I immediately went. Romain Rolland arranged for my stay in a hotel. Though we saw each other often, the language barrier stood in the way of any long discussion. He discovered an English-knowing gentleman in my hotel, but his knowledge of English was so limited that it did not improve matters.

I visited Burnville, Newchattel, Lausanne and Geneva. In Newchattel, walking along a bazar, I saw a piece of handspun cloth in a shop and walked in. An English-knowing shop assistant came to attend to me. She understood I was an Indian and began to talk of Mahatma Gandhi. I found that she had read most of his writings. She referred me to a shop in Munich where hand-made cloth was available. She showed me an old-type spinning wheel lying in a corner of her shop. It was very much like the Indian charkha, but was large and could be plied while sitting on a stool. When I came out of the shop, I realised to what an extent Romain Rolland's book on Gandhiji had made him known in that part of the world.

From Geneva I went to Paris and after two days' stay reached London. There I heard that one of our companions from Bihar, Satranjan Prasad Sinha, had been struck down by a car while alighting from an omnibus just in front of our

house. He was in hospital and his condition was critical. I rushed to the hospital and found that he had not yet regained consciousness. The same night he expired.

The tragedy cast a spell of gloom over us all and we were in no mood to go sight-seeing as we had intended earlier. We had to wait for three days for the coroner's inquest to finish and the body to be handed over to us for cremation. After the funeral I went for a short visit to Edinburgh and, on my return, left for the Continent on my way back to India.

I was to catch the boat at Marseilles which was to sail in the last week of August. I had ten days to myself and I thought I could use the period to see something of Europe. A youth conference was being held in Holland. I decided to go there.

I found I was not the only Indian at the conference. I had the company of Dr. Sanyal whom I met there. This conference was also a sort of anti-war convention, though the atmosphere was more sober than at Santagsburg. It was attended by delegates from many countries, America being the largest represented country. The conference was held in a village and we all put up in tents. The arrangements were simple but excellent. A siren would signal the hour of breakfast and we would assemble with mugs and plates in the open where we would be served. Another siren would indicate the start of the conference.

At the conference I found that young men and women took great interest in international affairs. They debated the utility of the League of Nations and such other things with great enthusiasm. I also addressed the conference.

From Holland I started on my short tour of Europe. I drew up an itinerary myself and in order not to waste time and see as many places as possible within the short time at my disposal, I generally travelled in the night and finished my hot bath in the train itself so that when the train arrived at my destination the next morning I was ready to go into the city for sight-seeing.

At Berlin railway station while I was trying to indicate to a taxi man, through gestures, my desire to go to a hotel, a Thomas Cook's man appeared and took me to a hotel where Hari Prasad Sinha happened to be staying. I stayed with him for

three days and toured round the city. I met there V. Chattopadhyaya. He had contacts in Russia and offered to arrange for a visa for me in case I wanted to go there, but as I had no time I declined the offer. From my hotel in Berlin I was able to get a list of vegetarian restaurants in Europe and it was very useful to me in my tour. I encountered some difficulty at first in making people understand that I did not touch eggs but later I picked up a few words to make myself understood.

The next place on the itinerary was Leipzig where I stayed for a day. The main purpose of my visit was to see Dr. Kuhn whose books I had read and whose system of hip bath I had started following while in India with some beneficial results. I went straight to his hospital from the station but there I was disappointed to learn that he had died some time previously in peculiar circumstances. It would appear that, although very old, as he was fond of fruits, he used to climb trees to pluck them himself. One day this hazardous practice led to his doom; he slipped and fell down and died of the injuries. I met his son in the hospital and, though he had a poor knowledge of English, he was able to make me understand. He prescribed a bath and a dietary and gave me a bath in the hospital itself.

I went for lunch to a restaurant. As there was none there who understood English, I was finding it rather difficult to indicate my needs when a woman sitting at a table nearby came to my rescue. She was a German and knew English well, having married an American. After lunch she took me round the city and saw me off at the railway station in the evening. I was very much touched by her sympathy and helpfulness.

I then reached Munich where I visited the well-known scientific museum and the famous Beer Cellar in which Adolf Hitler later made his earth-shaking orations. With some effort, I located the shop which, according to the shopkeeper of Newchattel, specialised in the sale of hand-made cloth, but no such cloth was available.

The next halt was Venice, the strange city of canals and romantic gondolas. Houses were built on rocks in the water, and people moved about in boats, the only transport available. The only open ground I saw was around the principal church

in the city which I visited. At night I went to a hotel but could hardly sleep there because of mosquitoes against which mosquito nets were no protection.

The next two days I spent in Rome. On my way to Marseilles I broke journey at Nice where I met Deepnarain Singh of Bhagalpur. After a few hours with him, I went round the city. I saw the casino where people gamble but it did not interest me and I took the train for Marseilles where I embarked on the S.S. MOOLTAN. On board there was a reunion, for I met Hariji and the other colleagues. What would have been an enjoyable voyage was marred by a relapse of my asthma because of the sea breeze. However, by the time we landed in Bombay in the second week of September 1928, I had recovered.

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The Simon Commission

FROM Bombay I went to Ahmedabad for a two-day stay with Gandhiji before going to Patna. Two developments had taken place during my absence: (1) the launching of the no-revenue campaign in Bardoli, and (2) the appointment of the Nehru Committee, consisting of representatives of all parties, to draft a Constitution for India.

The Bardoli satyagraha was a great success though Government took all possible measures to suppress it. Gandhiji had approved of the campaign and blessed it but the entire responsibility for conducting it was on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He conducted it with ingenuity, patience and great courage. The campaign was confined to the people of Gujerat and outsiders were asked by the Congress not to join it, though such help as they could send was not barred. The campaign became a model of satyagraha in the country. Its moral was that if people are united and willing to sacrifice they can compel even a strong Government to listen to them by strict adherence to the code of non-violence. The Sardar was able to demonstrate tangibly in one taluq what the people had been waiting to see since 1921. The people now began to think in terms of trying the Bardoli experiment in the country as a whole. This satyagraha thus prepared the ground for the future campaign of 1930.

The Madras Congress had appointed an all-party committee charged with the task of framing a Constitution for India. The Simon Commission had been boycotted by all but it was still busy with its work, and the committee thought that mere criticism of the Commission was not enough and that an agreed constitutional plan should be prepared. The Nehru Committee, so called because it was headed by Motilal Nehru, prepared a draft constitution which was agreed to by representatives of all parties. The disagreement was on a few and minor points. It was proposed to get the draft adopted by an all-party conference to be held along with the next Congress session in Calcutta for which Pandit Motilal Nehru had been elected President.

When I returned to India, the Nehru Committee report was being discussed throughout the country. The plan accepted dominion status as the political goal of India and, therefore, Congressmen like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and Srinivasa Iyengar were dissatisfied.

The Simon Commission returned to India a few days after my landing in Bombay and began its tour of the provinces which had not so far been visited. In the Punjab, Lala Lajpat Rai participated in the demonstrations held against the Commission. The police charged the demonstrators with lathis and Lala Lajpat Rai was seriously injured. He remained in a critical condition for long and was never to recover. In the U.P., in the lathi-charge on the demonstrators, Jawaharlal Nehru was injured. The Commission thus came to be associated with police batons. It was yet to visit Patna.

During my absence, two important developments had taken place in Bihar also. The Chief Justice of the Patna High Court, Sir Courtney Tyrell, had prosecuted the editor of the Congress daily, the *Searchlight*, for contempt of court—for having commented adversely on one of his judgments. The case assumed tremendous importance and eminent lawyers like Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sarat Chandra Bose appeared as defence counsels. Patna was agog with interest during the case. The paper, however, lost and had to submit to a small fine.

Sir Ganesh Dutta Singh, who had been Minister in the Bihar Cabinet since 1921 and who had been re-elected with difficulty to the Council because of Congress opposition, harboured bitterness against the Congress. He wanted to recompense the gentleman who had withdrawn from the contest in a particular constituency in Gaya and had thus facilitated Sir Ganesh's uncontested election to the Council. So, after a great deal of manoeuvring, he had Anugrah Narain Sinha, removed from the chairmanship of the Gaya District Board and helped his friend to take Sinha's place.

Bihar Congressmen were very angry at the ouster of Anugrah Narain Sinha. We suspected that things were being stage-managed for the benefit of the Simon Commission which was to visit our province shortly. The Government seemed to be intent on proving that whatever rights had been conferred

on Indians had not been properly utilised. The affairs of the Gaya District Board, Bihar's richest District Board, which were painted to be in a sorry state, were sought to be presented as an illustration. This resulted in a province-wide agitation for exposing the Government manoeuvre. A meeting was held in Gaya, in which I participated, and we decided to investigate the allegations made against the Gaya District Board. All of them were found baseless. Then we convened a meeting of the Provincial Political Conference in Patna under the presidentship of Anugrah Narain Sinha two days before the Simon Commission arrived. Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The Conference proved a great success.

The special train carrying the Simon Commission was to stop at the ceremonial platform where the Prince of Wales had alighted on his visit to Patna. Wooden barricades were being erected in order to prevent the public from proceeding beyond a point.

The evening before the arrival of the Commission, Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha called me to his house. When I arrived, I found the Inspector-General of Police, Swain, with him. Dr. Sinha told me that it was at Swain's instance that he had called me to discuss the arrival of the Simon Commission the next day. Swain told me that he did not want the incidents of the Punjab and U.P. to be re-enacted in Bihar and that he would be glad if some way could be found to avoid a clash between the demonstrators and the police. I replied that the people were unarmed and would remain peaceful and non-violent and if something happened it would be the responsibility of the other side. Swain assured me that he would not let anything happen from his side but he feared that in such a big crowd any small thing might spark a disturbance and he felt it was dangerous, therefore, to let too many people collect at the railway station. I told him plainly that it could not be helped. When he asked me about the expected strength of the crowd, I hesitantly put the figure at 10,000. In fact, it was a conservative estimate since I feared that at 6-30 a.m., on a cold December morning a large crowd might not collect at the station. The Inspector-General then asked me if it was not possible to keep the demonstrators and

the supporters of the Commission apart. I fell in with the idea at once and suggested that on the side of the road adjacent to the railway platform should be the supporters and on the side opposite the demonstrators. I really liked the idea because it would make the contrast so obvious.

The next morning Congressmen got up at three and took out *prabhat pheries* in the city. Soon, large crowds of people were seen moving towards the railway station. By six, about 30,000 people had gathered on the northern side of the road opposite the ceremonial platform. On the other side were hardly 200, mostly officials and their peons, in spite of the fact that cars and buses had been plying in the city to collect people. Some of the people who were brought in buses and led to the supporters' enclosure quietly crossed over to ours.

Just before the arrival of the Commission, Inspector-General Swain caught sight of me and walked over for a talk. He was very happy to see our arrangements and orderliness and congratulated me. I asked him if I was wrong in my estimate of the crowd. He said that it was very much larger than I had estimated. He laughed when I told him that the real reason for accepting his proposal was that keeping the two groups apart would make the respective strength of each side quite plain. Thus everything went off peacefully and nothing happened beyond the waving of black flags and shouting of " Simon go back ". But a great awakening had come.

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Calcutta Congress and All-Parties Conference

THE All-Parties Conference was held in Calcutta. I was mostly a silent observer. During the discussion on the Hindu-Muslim problem at an informal meeting one evening, Mohammedali Jinnah laid stress on two points. He wanted that one-third of the seats in the Central Assembly should be reserved for Muslims and that all residuary powers should vest in the provinces. The discussion continued till late in the night but his proposals did not find favour with the majority. In the open session, Maulana Mohammed Ali moved some amendments to the general resolution adopting the Nehru Report but they were also rejected by a majority of votes. The conference concluded its work but it could not carry the Muslims with it.

The result was that the Muslims called a separate all-parties conference soon after. Several Congress Muslims also joined it, notably the Ali brothers and Maulana Mohammed Shafi. This marked the defection of an influential section of the Muslims from the Congress and had a very adverse effect on Indian affairs in later years. It was soon afterwards that Mohammedali Jinnah presented his fourteen points on behalf of the Muslims and declared the acceptance of these "minimum" demands as essential for a compromise.

At the Calcutta Congress in 1928, over which Pandit Motilal Nehru presided, there was a heated discussion on the definition of "Swaraj" as laid down in the Nehru Report. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and Srinivasa Iyengar wanted complete independence to be the goal of the Congress while others were in favour of retaining the word "Swaraj" and thought it could be given any interpretation as the occasion demanded. The Nehru Report was drawn up on the basis of dominion status as India's goal. It could not have been otherwise with liberal leaders like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru having a major hand in the drafting of the Report.

Further, the Report would not have been acceptable to the all-parties conference otherwise.

Mahatma Gandhi was in favour of accepting the Nehru Report but he was always willing to hear the opposite point of view. After discussions, he arrived at a compromise with the chief protagonists of complete independence. So a new resolution was moved in the Subjects Committee which declared that dominion status would remain the goal of the Congress provided that the British Government accepted the Nehru Report within a year, failing which the goal would be changed to complete independence. Everyone thought that the matter was settled but the next day Subhas Chandra Bose signified that he could not accept the proposal. Mahatma Gandhi felt aggrieved because only the previous night Bose had approved of it. It would appear that the reason for Subhas's withdrawal of his approval was the reluctance of his followers to support him. But Jawaharlal Nehru and Srinivasa Iyengar, though reluctantly, stuck to the compromise resolution, which was eventually adopted by the Congress.

It was obvious from the debates in the Subjects Committee that some people were not satisfied with Gandhiji's policy. The Communists, led by Nimbkar and Joglekar, were loudly critical. One day during the session the workers of Calcutta marched in a huge procession with a view to entering the Congress pandal. It was thought that they planned to upset the proceedings but it appeared that such was not their aim and on Gandhiji talking to them they quietly trooped out of the place.

The Bihar delegates had some differences with the Reception Committee on the question of lodging arrangements and in a body refused to take part in the session. On hearing this, Subhas Bose gave his personal attention to the matter and removed the cause of their grievances and persuaded the Bihar delegates to participate in the session.

I was in two minds about the goal of the Congress as decided in Calcutta. I was an admirer of the British Constitution and it was my belief that even a dominion within the Commonwealth had complete freedom to manage its affairs, and I felt, therefore, that dominion status would serve our purpose all right. Complete independence, no doubt, brings a certain

prestige to a country but eventually every country has to seek some sort of relationship or affiliation with other countries in the world if the world is to be saved from perpetual conflict. The British Commonwealth is a realisation of such an idea, an association of free countries, and I saw no harm in being a member of it. Further, membership of it had its advantages. Besides, when we were not in a position to compel the British Government to concede complete independence to India, I could see no reason to adopt that as the Congress goal and that was why I had opposed the complete independence resolution at the Madras Congress.

There were occasions when I was deeply hurt at the treatment meted out to Indians in the British dominions and thought then that it was no good having any truck with such a Commonwealth. But A. B. Keith and the resolutions of the 1926 Imperial Conference would come to my mind and I argued to myself that once India attained dominion status, her nationals in the other dominions would receive equal treatment. Dominion status thus appeared to me to be the right goal for us and complete independence, I felt, would only add to our difficulties. I did not then accept Jawaharlal's view that dominion status was meant essentially for the people of the same race, those who were linked with Britain by social, religious and cultural ties, and that as we had no such ties with the British they would not offer us dominion status nor should we be satisfied with it even if we got it. I was imbued with the views of Gokhale who, when I had met him in Calcutta in 1910, had said that in the British Commonwealth all the members had equal status and an equal share in shaping its policy and that, therefore, when India became a dominion, she would come to have a dominating voice in the affairs of the Commonwealth by virtue of her large population. I was, therefore, of the view that if India got dominion status and equal rights with the other dominions of the Commonwealth, we need not demand anything more.

After the Calcutta session, Gandhiji began taking more active part in Congress work. He had always thought that one of the reasons for India's poverty was the British monopoly in textiles as it had resulted in the virtual disappearance

: spinning wheel which had once provided a means of
hood to millions of Indians. He, therefore, wanted to
: the spinning wheel and the handloom and that was the
n for his emphasis on khadi. While many interpreted
oycott of foreign cloth as a boycott of English cloth alone,
lhiji wanted the boycott to extend to all foreign countries.
rs thought that since our quarrel was with the British
rnment, the boycott of British manufactures was aimed
mpelling them to concede our demands. But Gandhiji
dered such a boycott as coercive and therefore violent
he deprecated it. Unlike others, Gandhiji wanted the
enous spinning and handloom industry to prosper once
in the Indian countryside.

ter the Calcutta Congress, therefore, he gave new life
: swadeshi movement. He laid stress on the use of the
ha and the handloom. A committee was set up to give
to the boycott of all foreign cloth. The propaganda
at on and there was a revival of enthusiasm in the
ry.

several places, Gandhiji organised bonfires of foreign
Once when he visited Calcutta on his way to Burma,
lled for the burning of foreign cloth at the end of a public
ng. People took off their shirts and coats and threw
on to a quickly collected heap of clothes which was soon
fire. The police, who had banned the bonfire of cloth
put out the fire after the meeting broke up. The next
Gandhiji was arrested and a prosecution was launched
st him in the Presidency Magistrate's Court for defying
an. Gandhiji's counsel held that the proceedings were
but Roseburgh, the Magistrate, who later became a
of the Calcutta High Court, rejected that plea and
the Mahatma one rupee. Gandhiji, who left for Rangoon
the hearing had been completed, returned to Calcutta
r the sentence.

ile Gandhiji was in Calcutta, an unfortunate incident
ed. In our province Ram Binod Sinha had been asso-
with the organisation of khadi work since 1921. He had
splendid work and was given a loan of Rs. 25,000 for the
erance of his projects. He had put the money to good use,
the industry had made rapid strides. Unfortunately,

latterly Ram Binod Sinha had some misunderstanding with his colleagues who felt that the institution built up by him was being considered by Ram Binod Sinha as his personal property. Acharya Kripalani who had originally recommended the grant of the loan to Ram Binod Sinha was also of the same opinion and was in favour of asking him to surrender the funds left in his charge. Being the agent for the Bihar branch of the Charkha Sangh, the responsibility of getting the money back fell on me. The Secretary of the Bihar Charkha Sangh, Lakshmi Narain, called on Ram Binod Sinha to submit accounts. There was no agreement between them and the matter went up to Gandhiji, who deputed Satish Chandra Das Gupta to investigate.

Satish Chandra Das Gupta conducted the initial inquiry in Calcutta where Lakshmi Narain and Ram Binod Sinha took their papers for scrutiny. When his report was submitted to Gandhiji, I had a shock in store for me. Satish Chandra had gone beyond his terms of reference and declared that the affairs of the Bihar branch of the Charkha Sangh were inefficiently conducted and mismanaged. I was very much pained by these findings and expressed my dissatisfaction to Mahatma Gandhi, who had just then returned from Burma, and requested that he should look into the accounts himself. I told him that on one side was the Charkha Sangh conducted by genuine, self-sacrificing workers, on the other was Ram Binod Sinha, capable and practical worker, who had done so much for the propagation of khadi but who stood charged with considering the institution he had built with public funds as his own proprietary concern. There was no question of mismanagement and the only matter in dispute, I stressed, was the amount of money with Ram Binod Sinha which he should be asked to return.

Mahatma Gandhi reassured me by saying that he would inquire into the matter again himself. After some time, he placed the matter in the hands of Naraindas Gandhi who approved of the accounts as submitted by the Bihar Charkha Sangh. Ram Binod Sinha was asked by Gandhiji to see him and disprove Naraindas Gandhi's findings. A day was fixed for this. But the matter did not proceed further. Gandhiji realised that our stand was correct.

I regard this episode as painful because enquiries had to be instituted against a person as near to me as Ram Binod Sinha. I had known him since he was a student at Bhagalpur and had been interned during the First World War. Our acquaintance grew into intimacy at the time of the Champaran satyagraha. During the civil disobedience movement and after we had undertaken the khadi work I had come to admire his efficiency and devotion to duty. At the same time I was sorry to find that a man like Satish Chandra Das Gupta whose sacrifices in the country's cause were almost unparalleled and whom I held in high esteem and respect, should have passed such strictures on the Bihar Charkha Sangh.

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Classification of Political Prisoners

THE famous Lahore Conspiracy Case began in 1929. Bhagat Singh was one of the principal accused persons. The trial dragged on for a long time during which the accused went on hunger-strike as a protest against the treatment meted to them in prison. The hunger-strike was a prolonged one and Jatindra Nath Das, one of the accused, died after having fasted for 60 days. His body was handed over to his friends who took it from Lahore to Calcutta by train. At stations *en route* large crowds flocked to pay their homage to the martyr. A wave of enthusiasm and patriotic fervour swept the country. Condemnation of maltreatment in prisons was voiced everywhere. The death and the agitation had an immediate effect and the Government set about effecting some reforms in prisons, especially for political prisoners. They proposed to have three categories of political prisoners on the basis of their status, standard of living and education. These proposals were implemented at the time of the 1930 Satyagraha. A few got ' A ' Division. A slightly larger number was put in ' B ' and the vast majority lumped as ' C ' Division prisoners. Government turned down the demand that all political prisoners should be regarded as belonging to a distinct and separate category and treated alike.

The classification was harmful to us. Of course, if a person used to a high standard of living is treated like an ordinary prisoner, his suffering on that account becomes much more intense and the principle of equal punishment for the same offence is violated. Probably the Government intended to minimise or avoid these hardships. But the classification tended to cause dissatisfaction and, possibly, frustration among political prisoners when those who had been working as a team in public life were treated differently in jails. Some of them slept on cots, got better food to eat or were given more facilities for interviews with friends and relatives, while others were treated like ordinary criminals and made to sleep on the floor and given the nasty jail food served to other convicts.

There was great discontent among the C-Division prisoners, many of whom became jealous of the A and B-Division prisoners although it was not because of agitation by the latter that the classification had been effected. A majority of the C-Division prisoners were, however, a generous and public-spirited lot and they appreciated the fact that the prisoners had had no hand in the classification. They realised that the authorities allotted classes in an arbitrary manner to different prisoners just as when convicting them for the same offence one got three months' imprisonment and another got three years.

Gandhiji has been always of the opinion that there should be no difference between one prisoner and another. He felt that if political prisoners formed a separate class, other prisoners would continue to be neglected. He wanted, therefore, that there should be agitation for improvement in the conditions of all prisoners. It is this policy that he extended to travel also. He always travelled third class and wanted others to follow his example in order that conditions of third class travel might improve. But not all Congressmen thought that way and nothing came of our agitation.

When I went to jail for the first time, not being in favour of prisoners starting any agitation, I felt that the question should be tackled by those outside the jails. But I was later convinced that only the prisoners can effectively agitate. My subsequent experience only confirmed this view and whatever little improvement was effected in the conditions of prisoners was the result of their own agitation.

So far I had never taken any interest in labour problems. I was too preoccupied with political work to take on added responsibilities. In fact, no political worker in Bihar took interest in the organisation of trade union work in the province. Trade union activities in Jharia and Jamshedpur were in the hands of people from other parts. I had been visiting Jamshedpur now and then in connection with Congress work but I had not applied my mind to the labour question.

In 1928 the workers of the Tata Iron and Steel Company went on strike. Subhas Chandra Bose, President of the Mazdoor Sangh, visited Jamshedpur during the strike and started negotiations with the management and soon a compromise

was reached. But Subhas Bose had a rival in Manek Homi, a local trade union leader, who did not accept the compromise. With the support of a section of the workers, he set up another Mazdoor Sangh and started vilifying Subhas Bose. But as a settlement had been reached, the Company did not feel called upon to pay attention to Homi. A split had been caused among the workers and this state of affairs continued.

Meanwhile, the workers of the Tin Plate Company, another factory in Jamshedpur, went on strike. The management took up a stiff attitude and refused to negotiate with the workers, who then sought the help of Subhas Bose. He came to Jamshedpur and my friend, Abdul Bari, also arrived there to assist him. Subhas Bose wrote to me asking me to take interest in the question. Convinced that the workers' cause was just and that I should give some time to the labour of my own province, I went to Jamshedpur to study the question. From then on, the responsibility of conducting the strike fell on Abdul Bari's shoulders and mine. The strike continued for ten months. I made several trips to Jamshedpur and recommended to the Government that, under the Trade Disputes Act, the matter should be taken up for adjudication. But the Government did not accept my view. Then I met the Chief Secretary and a member of the Governor's Executive Council. They told me that they considered the strike wrong and unjustified and that Manek Homi, the labour leader, was also opposed to the strike. It suited the Government now to agree with Homi since it did not want to do anything to help the workers. Our efforts at settlement, therefore, ended in a complete failure for after ten months the strike failed; many workers never returned to work and those who wanted to return were not accepted by the Company.

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A Trip to Burma

When I was returning from England with Hari Prasad Sinha, he expressed a desire that I should visit Ziyawadi, his zamindari in Burma. I also had a yearning to go to Burma but that desire was not fulfilled in 1928. In 1929, Hariji himself went to Burma and that gave me an opportunity to go there too. Further, an invitation came from another source and that became the determining factor for my trip to Burma.

Hariji's father had acquired land in Burma and taken many Bihari labourers with him and settled them there. Like him, Mylne, an indigo planter in Shahabad, had also gone to Burma with many cultivators and settled down there. Hariji and Mylne established themselves as big landlords. They cleared dense forests, infested with wild animals, and made the land cultivable. They incurred great expenditure but later it began to pay dividends. The yield of surgarcane and other crops from the land was very rich and the two made great profits. The zamindari of Hariji was called Ziyawadi and that of Mylne, Kyantaga. Just at this time, there was some discontent among the tenants of Kyantaga and because they had heard that I had worked with Gandhiji in the Champaran satyagraha, they requested me to visit them and settle the dispute. I acceded to this request, and accompanied by Mathura Prasad, I left for Rangoon in November 1929.

As our ship neared Rangoon, we saw with a thrill the steadily emerging golden towers and minarets of Rangoon's pagodas on the horizon. In Rangoon, the people were very hospitable to us and they presented a welcome address to me at a public meeting. In my reply, I referred to the age-long Indo-Burmese ties. In the times gone by, India too had an overseas empire, but unlike the present-day empires, it was not based on violence or sustained by armed might. Religion was the basis of the empire. It was the silken threads of a common philosophy that bound India to the neighbouring countries and all of them were equals, none dominating the others.

Buddhism left India and Bihar, the land of its birth, and gathered a larger number of adherents than any other religion in the world. But the places where the Buddha was born, where he gained enlightenment, where he taught and where he attained Mahaparinirvana have become centres of pilgrimage and are sacred to Buddhists all over the world. Buddhists everywhere look upon us with respect because our land is the birthplace of the Buddha. No political empire could ever receive such a tribute of love and reverence from other peoples.

I went to Kyantaga and stayed there for some time. I met Mylne, the landlord, and the ryots and tried to effect a compromise in their dispute. I would have been successful had it not been for some instructions from London which upset the whole thing. No settlement was reached, but later the cultivators succeeded in getting some relief.

Cultivators in Ziyawadi also had their complaints, but these had not assumed serious proportions, thanks to Hariji's tact. Our work was, therefore, lightened there and I went round the villages which looked almost like the villages in Bihar. The people had not changed; they spoke Bhojpuri, dressed like Biharis and lived like them. I saw the green fields which had replaced dense forests and my admiration for Hariji redoubled. He had settled on those lands thousands of Biharis who prospered there and he himself had an annual income of lakhs of rupees. I received a donation for the Bihar Vidyapith there as well as from the business community in Rangoon.

In Rangoon too, there was quite a large number of Biharis living. I was surprised when a former servant of mine, a native of Zeradei, accosted me in Rangoon. He was working as a domestic servant and, learning of my arrival, had come to see me. There was also a fairly large population of Gujerati and Marwari business men in the city, but in the countryside, one could find many South Indians, particularly Chettiars who carried on banking business. A good many Andhras were there, living as labourers like the Biharis. At that time, Nageswararao Pantulu of Andhra happened to visit Burma. Both of us were given a reception by prominent Burmese and Indians. The reception was attended by the Mayor of Rangoon

and an Englishman who later became the Speaker of the Burmese Legislative Council.

I was surprised to see all the people, including the Englishmen, squatting on the floor to eat. Except in Gandhiji's ashram, I had not seen a European sitting or taking his food in the Indian style. Generally, when we invite a foreigner for a meal we arrange to serve the food he is used to and in the western style. Even from his own point of view, there is no meaning in such practice. He has not come to our place to take the food that he takes every day at his own place. Why should he not know what food we take and what our customs are? I am sure foreigners who are desirous of knowing something about India and Indians must wish, though they may not express it, that when they are invited they should be served Indian dishes in Indian style. But, somehow, we feel ashamed to display our customs and way of life to foreigners. What I saw there was therefore a welcome change. After a few days' stay, I boarded the ship for Calcutta.

On board the ship I got a very bad attack of asthma. The Medical Officer gave me some injections which provided relief. On disembarking in Calcutta, I went to the house of my friend, Jogendranarain Majumdar, a barrister. I decided to leave Calcutta after three days' rest and treatment for Monghyr to attend the Bihar Provincial Political Conference for which I had been elected president. So far I had been under the treatment of allopaths, vaids and hakims. My friend suggested that I should try homoeopathy and I agreed. An old homoeopath, in whom my friend had great faith, was called in. After examining me, the doctor said that he would take up my case only if I promised to continue his treatment for some time and not to take any other medicine during that time. He also warned me that the trouble might aggravate but that I should not be alarmed as it would be a good symptom. On my accepting his conditions, he gave me a dose of some medicine, saying that for another two months I should take no other medicine. With full faith in him and thinking that in two months I would be cured, I agreed to do as he bid.

I wrote out my Presidential address while in Calcutta and after three days I left for Monghyr. During the journey I

caught a chill and by the time I reached Monghyr I was again ill and could not participate in the conference. Someone read out my speech. The Lahore Congress was only three weeks ahead and the controversy over the goal of the Congress was very much alive. Therefore, I had dealt with that question in my speech and had advocated dominion status. I was so ill that I could not ascertain then what resolutions the Monghyr conference adopted. It was only later that I also learnt that I had been elected President of the Provincial Congress Committee.

I thought that the sudden aggravation of my malady was the reaction to the dose of medicine given by the homoeopath, as he had predicted, and, therefore, took no other medicine and hoped that everything would turn out well in two months. But that hope remained only a hope. My brother took me to Patna. There Dr. Bannerji examined me and Dr. Phani Mookerji took an X-ray of my lungs. They became anxious but I stuck to my decision not to take any other medicine. We were in constant touch with the Calcutta homoeopath who, however, kept on reassuring us that there was no cause for anxiety and that no more medicine was necessary. One day, the Patna doctors thought that if there was no improvement the next day my condition might become critical and said they could leave me no more at the mercy of a physician living at Calcutta. When he was told of this, the homoeopath decided to come to Patna, meanwhile prescribing some medicine which I learnt later to have been pure water. When he arrived, the Patna doctors felt that they had been relieved of their responsibility. The homoeopath stayed with us for two days but administered no medicine. Suddenly, the trouble began to subside and after four days my temperature returned to normal. An X-ray examination revealed that my lungs were normal.

As I was not yet quite well, I could not think of going to the Lahore Congress and left for Zeradei. For nearly two months I stayed at home along with my friend Satishchandra Mookerji. We read of the Congress session in the newspapers and discussed the political situation. During this time, I wrote a pamphlet on non-violence and showed it to Satishchandra Mookerji. He liked it so much that he promised to take it

with him to Banaras, and get it published. Soon after, the satyagraha began and I was so much preoccupied with it that I forgot all about the pamphlet.

During my forced stay in Zeradei I had another companion, my nephew Janardan Prasad's baby son, who was born earlier in the year. When he was born my brother was so overjoyed that he celebrated on a grand scale. He spent a lot of money on religious and other ceremonies and distributed new clothes to the servants. The child was handsome and we were all very fond of him. He provided Satishchandra Mookerji and me with the means of diversion in our dull moments. But the boy was not fated to live long. While in his sixth year, two months after my brother's death, the child died of typhoid in Patna. We were all so overwhelmed with sorrow that we could not get over it for long. When in 1941, Mrityunjaya got a son, I forbade all festivities.

While the Congress was in session in Lahore, Mazharul Haq passed away in the village of Faridpur, in Chapra district, after a few days' illness. It was some years since he had left Patna and settled down in Faridpur where he lived in a small bungalow in a mango orchard belonging to him. The passing of his son, who was drowned in a nearby stream, had cast a shadow of despondency on him and he used to spend his time reading books on spiritualism. In fact, he had quite a big library stocked with books on the subject. He became indifferent to his surroundings and lived like a recluse. On hearing of his death, I went to Faridpur and offered my condolences to his wife. We were all very much stricken by his death. We felt helpless because a bulwark of Hindu-Muslim unity was no more. A public meeting was held in Patna, where it was decided to raise a suitable memorial for the departed leader, but, unfortunately, it has so far remained a mere resolution. I had suggested the erection of a National Hall in his memory. Little progress has been made in this direction either. Although land was acquired for the purpose, the foundation for the building is yet to be laid.

65
Salt Satyagraha

LORD IRWIN, the Viceroy of India, went to England in 1929 to discuss the Indian situation with the Labour Government which was then in power. Ramsay Macdonald was the Prime Minister and Wedgewood Benn, Secretary of State for India. On his return Lord Irwin made an announcement to the effect that in declarations of British policy on India dominion status was implicit. He hinted at the possibility of holding a Round Table Conference in England to consider the Indian question. This announcement appeared to be an answer to the Calcutta Congress resolution demanding the conferment of dominion status within a year.

If the Government thought that this announcement would clear the doubts of the people and improve the situation, their hopes were not to be fulfilled. A great controversy raged in the press in which the announcement was analysed threadbare. The Liberals appeared to be satisfied with it but the Congress felt that no clear offer had been made by the Government and reiterated the demand made in the Calcutta resolution. It was decided that clarifications should be sought from the Government.

On the eve of the Lahore Congress session, which was held in December 1929, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi and Motilal Nehru met Lord Irwin. Their talks made it clear to the leaders that the Congress interpretation was correct — that dominion status was still far away. Those who had thought that it was somewhere round the corner had been misled by Lord Irwin's statement that dominion status was already in action in India. For us it served as a warning that all pronouncements of the British Government should be read and re-read, scanned and analysed, in a dispassionate and realistic manner and for this we felt grateful to Lord Irwin.

The Lahore session of the Congress, therefore, felt compelled to adopt the goal of complete independence and a resolution to this effect was approved unanimously. The Congress also

directed party units all over the country to prepare the people for satyagraha to achieve the objective of complete independence. Having noted the unmistakable signs of awakening everywhere, the Congress was emboldened now to take a stand on satyagraha. A few days later the Working Committee directed the country to observe January 26 as Independence Day, when meetings were to be held all over the country, the National Flag was to be hoisted, and a pledge taken by all to work for the achievement of independence. The Congress declaration incorporating the pledge was to be translated into all regional languages so that every Indian might understand it when repeating it. The Working Committee made it clear that at the meetings only the pledge was to be read word by word and the audience made to repeat it and that no speech was to be made.

I was convalescing after my illness and I decided to stir out on January 26. I had several calls to attend public meetings but I was able to attend only two. After attending a meeting in my own village I was going by car to Siwan when the car broke down. When I thought that I would not be able to make it, a police car hove in sight and the officer was kind enough to offer me a lift which I thankfully accepted. I was in time for the Siwan meeting where the pledge was duly taken.

The Independence Day programme was carried out in almost all the towns in India, indicating that the country was now prepared to take a big step for the attainment of independence. Everyone talked of satyagraha. There was expectancy in the air. People were anxiously awaiting the signal to launch satyagraha. Gandhiji was preparing the ground by his writings which injected a new spirit into the people.

At Sabarmati ashram a meeting of the Working Committee was called to discuss whether the country was prepared for satyagraha or not and when and in what way it should be launched. Some felt that the country was not yet fully prepared. But Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru were of the contrary view and were keen on launching satyagraha at an early date. Then the discussion turned to the form that it should take. Gandhiji made a strong plea for breaking salt laws. He said

that salt was an essential commodity available easily from sea water or other natural sources and should be freely obtainable by poor people whereas people could neither get it cheap nor in adequate quantity. Like water and air, salt was meant to be available to everyone, but the Government banned access to the natural sources and levied a duty on this very essential article. Gandhiji further argued that anti-salt law satyagraha would be easily understood by all and would also be considered just by the world at large.

It was characteristic of Gandhiji to enunciate a major principle from simple things. He thought that once we were able to break these unjust laws, we would be able to exercise control over other laws. When after the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy he laid stress on justice for the victims, he thought that if we could get justice for those stricken people, that experience would enble us to fight injustices elsewhere. In the same way, Gandhiji said, by breaking the salt laws Indians would be able to develop strength enough to get other things done by the Government according to their wishes.

Many of us found it difficult to appreciate Gandhiji's argument. We could not understand how the Government could be expected to do something unless it was compelled to do so. How people all over the country could break the salt laws was not clear. While those in coastal areas could break the laws easily by manufacturing salt from sea water, how could the majority of Indians living in the interior do it? We knew that in certain places, particularly in U.P. and Bihar, salt was once prepared from saline earth by members of the Nonya caste who had been deprived of their traditional work since the manufacture and distribution of salt became a Government monopoly. Salt laws could be broken only at places where salt could be produced. Further, would the programme enthuse the people? Would the educated classes be interested in it? Though Nonyas might succeed in extracting salt from earth, some of us felt that it was not fair to incite these poor and backward people and involve them in the satyagraha. But Gandhiji's decision was irrevocable. He was convinced that salt satyagraha was the best thing to undertake and he was sure that it would galvanise the whole country.

I had my own doubts of the success of the programme in Bihar. I told Gandhiji about the chaukidari tax which everyone had to pay and which was a source of popular discontent in Bihar. In the collection of the tax, the poor were subjected to hardship, their household effects being sometimes attached and auctioned. I was of the view that opposition to this tax would provide a better basis for agitation and would be assured of the people's spontaneous support. Gandhiji did not agree. He said our campaign would be doomed to failure if we started with opposition to the chaukidari tax. "Let us first break the salt laws," he averred, "and then we shall be able to launch other no-tax campaigns if popular enthusiasm is aroused." I kept silent though I was not quite convinced. I wondered why in Bihar we should break the law by making salt, leaving aside such an obvious thing as refusing to pay the chaukidari tax. But I had faith in Gandhiji's experience of the technique of satyagraha and his foresight and capacity to lead. So, as was my wont, I placed my views before him and, when he did not accept them, signified my readiness to abide by his.

Gandhiji then made his plans. He decided to leave Sabarmati Ashram on an appointed date and march to Dandi, a seaside village in Surat district, 150 miles away. He hoped to cover the distance in a month and on April 6 to reach Dandi where he would break the salt law on that day. But before launching the satyagraha, he sent a letter to the Viceroy through Reynolds, an Englishman living in Sabarmati Ashram, giving the details of his campaign. As expected, the letter brought no reply. Gandhiji then went ahead with his plans. Before starting on his march he gave strict directions to all Congress committees not to launch any campaign themselves and await his call for satyagraha. The A.-I.C.C. was convened at Sabarmati to ratify his plan but by the time it met Gandhiji was on his way to Dandi.

On the day of Gandhiji's departure there was a large assemblage of enthusiastic people outside the ashram. It looked as if the whole of Ahmedabad town had turned out. Amidst enthusiastic scenes and great jubilation, Gandhiji left the ashram with 80 of his ashramites on the long trek to Dandi, declaring that he would not return to Sabarmati till he secured Swaraj. Meanwhile, the A.-I.C.C. met in Ahmedabad and

formally approved Gandhiji's plan. Many of the delegate among whom were Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru and me went to Jambusar, and met Gandhiji. After accompanying him for some distance, we returned.

There was unparalleled enthusiasm in the country and the people eagerly awaited the 6th of April. Many had wanted to accompany Gandhiji but he would have none of it. Perhaps Sardar Patel would have been included in the party but for his arrest before the march started. During the period of waiting I asked Jawaharlal Nehru to tour Bihar and he readily agreed. I wanted him to visit as many places as possible and address gatherings in the limited time at his disposal and so I made a businesslike plan. I arranged for three cars for the party. One with volunteers would go ahead of the other two and reach the appointed place first. They would create an atmosphere for the public meeting by singing national songs. Then I would arrive in the second car and prepare for the meeting, when the first car would move ahead to the next meeting place. When Nehru's car arrived and he began addressing the gathering, I myself would leave and follow the first car. In this fashion, we were able to avoid waste of time and to fulfil our programme. It was a very successful tour and it generated great enthusiasm in the province.

66
Satyagraha in Bihar

WHILE Jawaharlal Nehru was addressing the last meeting of his Bihar tour at Maharajganj, in Chapra district, we received intimation that Gandhiji had given the signal and salt satyagraha was to be offered everywhere from April 6. This was rather sudden, for, we had not yet finalised our plans. Jawaharlal left the same day for Allahabad and we sent messengers in the night to all places giving the go-ahead signal. In Champaran, Bipin Bihari Verma had decided to march from Motihari to Jogapatti to offer satyagraha there. Muzaffarpur came next. Then within a few days the movement spread to the whole province. I reached Jogapatti on the day Bipin Bihari Verma manufactured salt but before I could see him I was told that he had been arrested and taken to the improvised court at Jogapatti for a summary trial.

I made my way to the court. On the way I found that the entire route of Bipin Bihari's march and the place where the satyagrahis were camping were gaily decorated with buntings, festoons and arches. The whole place went wild with enthusiasm. At the court I found that the magistrate was an old non-co-operator, who had left the Patna College in 1921 and had joined us in the National Mahavidyalaya but who had, after some time, pressed by his family, gone back to the Patna College. I noticed that while hearing the case he never once raised his head. With his eyes glued to the papers on the table, he wrote his judgment and read it. Sentenced to a term of imprisonment, Bipin Bihari Verma was taken to Motihari Jail.

Meanwhile satyagraha was being offered throughout the country and people were being arrested in thousands. Gandhiji had not been arrested. After a visit to Motihari I left for Patna. From there I went on a tour of the province to propagate satyagraha. After a hurried tour of some places I returned to Patna by steamer at midnight. At the jetty I was told that satyagraha had been started in Patna just that day. People from Bakarganj were moving to the city with flags in their

hands with the intention of manufacturing salt but they were stopped opposite the Sultanganj police station. The police formed a cordon round them, preventing them from proceeding further. I went straight to the place and witnessed a strange sight. With the police round them in a circle, the satyagrahis were sleeping in the middle of the road. The people of the neighbourhood had given them food and bedding. When I arrived, most of them woke up and narrated their story to me. After a while I went to the Sadaqat Ashram to rest for the night.

Early next morning I returned to the spot. I found a large police force mustered there. The District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police were also there. A large crowd of people had gathered to watch developments. I thought that the satyagrahis might be arrested or let off after a beating. Suddenly a man approached me and said that the District Magistrate was in the police station and would like to speak to me. I followed him. The Magistrate told me to ask the satyagrahis to disperse as otherwise he would have to take action against them. I told him that he could arrest them. He said that he wanted the crowd to disperse and that if the place was not cleared quickly the consequences might be serious. When I refused to withdraw the volunteers, he replied that the responsibility for the consequences would be mine. I thought it advisable to consult my colleagues and the District Magistrate gave me half an hour to give him an answer. When I was leaving the police station, he took out his watch and asked me to adjust my time to his. I resented this and refused to do so, saying that he could do what he liked if he did not hear from me in half an hour.

I drove to Sadaqat Ashram and consulted my friends. They were all of the view that we should do nothing and let the District Magistrate take any action he thought fit. I conveyed this decision on the telephone to the police station. Then I returned to Sultanganj. On the way my car crossed the District Magistrate's and I saw him smiling. At Sultanganj I was told that on the satyagrahis' refusal to disperse, the District Magistrate had ordered the mounted police to make a charge. The police came riding towards the satyagrahis who had laid themselves prostrate on the ground and stopped

short. Then the satyagrahis had been bodily lifted and placed in lorries which left for an unknown destination.

Now we decided to send satyagrahis in batches of five to Sultanganj. As soon as a batch was arrested another took its place. This went on day and night. April was coming to an end and it was getting very hot. The satyagrahis had to stand in the sun the whole day waiting to be arrested. So in order to reduce the inconvenience I changed the plan. I sent batches at fixed times, four in 24 hours. On the first day, only the satyagrahis were arrested, but from then on, when the crowd of spectators began to swell, the mounted police was ordered to charge at them too. The satyagrahis were sometimes arrested, sometimes ignored, but the people were invariably the victims of police violence. The police attacks occurred generally in the mornings and afternoons. I was sometimes in the crowd, a witness to the police atrocities and though I escaped their attention, Abdul Bari was badly injured.

The satyagraha lasted several days and it attracted more and more people and the area covered by the satyagraha went on expanding till it touched the Patna College premises. The people remained peaceful but the police became more and more aggressive. One day while the police were attacking the spectators, Mrs. Hasan Imam, who happened to be passing that way, witnessed the tragic scene. Many heads were broken. Moved deeply, she rushed back home and told her husband the story, expressing great anxiety about the future. Hasan Imam, of whose interest in our activities I was till then not aware, sent for me. On my meeting him and giving him an account of the police atrocities, Hasan Imam, impulsive and impetuous by nature, flew into a rage and assured me of all help that he could give. As the days passed, his enthusiasm for the movement grew.

Meanwhile, the Easter holidays intervened. I looked upon satyagraha as a religious war and so I thought that it should not stand in the way of others attending to their religious duties. I wrote a letter to the District Magistrate saying that, as there were some Christians in the police force, no batch of satyagrahis would be sent on Easter day. For the same reason, we had not offered satyagraha on the afternoon of the previous Friday because of the employment of a number of Muslims

in the police force. The District Magistrate, on reading my note, telephoned to me to confirm if I really meant it. When I said, " Yes ", he asked me to meet him so that we could find a way out of the impasse.

I had a long talk with the District Magistrate. I said that it was a minor matter and that it could be settled amicably if batches of five were allowed to pass unchecked and arrested according to law when they manufactured salt. The Magistrate suggested an alternative route but I would not agree to his suggestion and the talks broke down. The next day, the satyagrahis who marched in front of the Sultanganj police station were arrested by the Assistant Superintendent of Police and after the arrests the crowds melted away. The mounted police was conspicuous by its absence. The arrested satyagrahis were taken to court. While the case was being heard, another batch passed near Sultanganj police station but it was not stopped by the police. At the court the satyagrahis were sentenced to imprisonment till the rising of the court, which synchronised with pronouncement of the sentence. It was now clear to us that the satyagrahis would not be barred by the police. Our view was confirmed when a third batch was also not interfered with. Then we stopped sending batches of satyagrahis *via* the Sultanganj area and began manufacturing salt. But those who broke the salt law were not spared. Thus the number of arrests in Patna as well as the whole province began to mount.

67

Boycott of Foreign Cloth

THE Government had a salt depot at Dharsana, in Gujerat, where large quantities of salt were stored in the open. Congress volunteers led in turn by Abbas Tayabji and Sarojini Naidu marched to the depot in defiance of Government orders and were severely beaten. The leaders were arrested one after another. The police were almost brutal. Satyagrahis were beaten till they became unconscious and were dragged about in that condition. Badly injured men were taken to Congress hospitals on cots. The lurid accounts published in the newspapers instead of scaring the people brought more and more volunteers to the scene in a renewed endeavour to continue the violation of law. But the lathi charges continued mercilessly and hundreds were arrested. The satyagraha was carried on till the rains set in, rendering the approaches to the Dharsana salt depot impassable.

Early during the movement Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested and Motilal Nehru took over the presidentship of the Congress. He was not arrested till the end of June though he too manufactured salt in his own house, and showed it to us with pride. The Congress Working Committee met frequently at Allahabad and issued regular instructions to satyagrahis and offered them whatever help it could give. The Government did not slacken a bit in their repressive policy which had by now become a settled pattern throughout the country. Wherever salt was manufactured the police went to the spot, broke the pots, destroyed the ovens, arrested some volunteers and beat up the rest. But, undaunted, people renewed their efforts, with the same results.

In Bihar salt was manufactured from saline earth. I did not manufacture salt myself but wherever I went I auctioned the salt manufactured by satyagrahis, using the money collected to meet our expenses. Though the sale of salt without a licence was also unlawful I was not arrested for a long time. I learnt that in the beginning the Government had no intention of arresting me. It was later that I discovered that at a conference of officials, the District Magistrates had been authorised

to arrest me if it was thought necessary. I was mostly engaged in touring the districts, seeing to the manufacturing of salt, encouraging the satyagrahis and addressing public meetings.

A sense of rivalry prevailed in the countryside. Every village wanted to have the honour of getting the largest number of people arrested. The villages which for one reason or another could not manufacture salt felt sorry about it. None broke the law clandestinely because it was an open satyagraha. During my tour of the countryside I often saw the villagers gather in open places decorated with buntings and plantain leaves and manufacture salt with great ceremony.

In consultation with other leaders, I decided to continue the salt satyagraha till June, when the rains would set in, making the manufacture of salt impossible, and thereafter to take up the boycott of foreign cloth and prohibition propaganda. In my speeches and informal talks I told the people of the significance of the salt satyagraha, the boycott of foreign cloth and the prohibition programme. I told them that just then the salt satyagraha took precedence over the others but when the time came the others would be taken up and, therefore, they should keep themselves in readiness for them. In answer to their questions, I said that anti-chaukidari tax and no-rent campaigns could also be taken up later.

Though the salt satyagraha had the priority, boycott of foreign cloth and propagation of prohibition were also carried on in towns and in the countryside. We learnt of the progress of these campaigns at the time of the Working Committee meeting in Allahabad. We then took up the boycott of foreign cloth in Bihar also. Even traders co-operated with us with great enthusiasm. The spirit of healthy rivalry which marked the salt satyagraha spread to the foreign cloth boycott movement too, each town trying to seal up a larger quantity of foreign cloth than the others. It became a routine for stockists to pack up foreign cloth and have the bundles sealed by Congressmen to be opened only if the Congress allowed them to. In some places business men formed their own committees to organise this work and the committee imposed fines on errant traders. Shops of recalcitrant traders who defied the committees were subjected to picketing. But in Bihar, most of the traders sealed their stocks willingly and only in rare

cases had we to picket shops. Leading business men of Kanpur, Delhi and the Punjab often met Motilal Nehru and discussed with him how best to make the picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops a complete success and how to enlist the help of the millowners. Printed pledges were widely distributed for the public and traders to sign.

In some places greater emphasis was laid on prohibition, and it resulted in large-scale arrests and even shooting. In the North-West Frontier Province where the police resorted to shooting, many Pathans were killed. Vithalbhai Patel, first elected President of the Central Legislative Assembly, resigned his office in protest and went to that province to conduct an inquiry. The Government confiscated his report and it could not be widely publicised but what had come out in the papers electrified the whole country.

The picketing of foreign cloth shops was entrusted to women by Gandhiji and they responded with great enthusiasm. No prospective buyer dared to come near a shop outside which a woman was picketing, and even the shopkeepers, faced with a delicate situation, behaved well. Picketing in Bihar, though it had not to be done on a large scale, was organised by Vindhyavasni Devi. Male volunteers used to go round houses and bring the women picketers to the bazar and post them in front of the shops and escort them all back to their homes in the evening. One incident which occurred in Patna may interest readers. One day a newly-married girl went out to picket a shop. In the evening, the volunteers forgot to take her home. The husband of one of the picketers who had come in his car to take his wife home saw the girl outside a shop. When asked she said she was waiting for the volunteers to escort her home. The gentleman said that the volunteers must have forgotten to pick her up and offered to take her home in his car. But the girl did not know her address nor, she said, would she be able to recognise her house, not having ever seen her house from the outside. The couple took her in their car all the same, thinking that they would be able to locate her house by some clue that they might get from her on questioning. They fruitlessly ran about here and there and when they did not succeed in finding her house asked her to write the name of her husband as, according to custom,

women do not pronounce the names of their husbands. But the girl wrote it out in the Kaithi script which the couple did not understand. With some difficulty they were able to find a man who knew the script and succeeded in locating the girl's house late in the evening.

This little incident will show the straits to which women were reduced on account of the custom of *purdah* though, at the same time, it is an example of the great enthusiasm with which the women of Bihar responded to the Congress call. The custom of *purdah* prevails among nearly all strata of society in Bihar. When I was away in England an agitation was started to end the custom. A young man of Darbhanga, Ramnandan Mishra, took his wife unveiled to Sabarmati Ashram. Gandhiji sent Radha, daughter of Maganlal Gandhi, to Bihar to educate the women and help remove *purdah*. Maganlal then came to Bihar to see his daughter and find out how she was progressing. He took ill and died in Patna. Somehow this occurrence led to the acceleration of the drive against the evil system in the province. A provincial antipurdah conference was held, in which Braj Kishore Prasad took a leading part. Though there was an awakening in this direction in the province, it was during the 1930 satyagraha campaign that the *purdah* system began losing its hold.

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Bihpur Satyagraha

On my return from Allahabad after attending the Working Committee meeting, I learned that a peculiar kind of satyagraha had been started in Bihpur, which is a small railway junction, the starting station of the train for Bhagalpur Ghat. The genesis of the trouble was that some Congress volunteers who lived in an ashram near the railway station started picketing a *ganja* (hemp) shop situated a few yards away. Soon the police arrived on the spot, threw away the stocks of cotton, yarn and cloth, beat up the Congressmen, turned them out of the ashram and took it into their possession. Congressmen began offering peaceful satyagraha in an effort to retrieve the ashram from the police. Volunteers in batches of four or five with small flags in their hands would arrive at the place and try to enter the ashram. It was obvious that these unarmed satyagrahis could not displace the armed police force which was in numbers and that it was just a pretext for offering satyagraha. The police thought likewise. The batch would march every afternoon and court arrest.

The news of the satyagraha spread and people started collecting at the place. I went to Bihpur accompanied by Anant Prasad and Kamleshwari Sahay, Bihar M.L.A.s, Baldev Sahay and Murli Manohar Prasad of Patna, and Patal Babu, a well-known advocate and a Congress worker of Bhagalpur. Hearing of our arrival, a crowd of about twenty thousand collected. I appealed to the crowd to be peaceful and maintain perfect non-violence. When the usual time when satyagrahis marched towards the ashram and courted arrest arrived, the people stood on the road and all around to have a view of the events. I was viewing the scene from a place in the market. At that time a batch of volunteers arrived and marched towards the ashram and when they neared the place, the police quietly arrested them. The crowd now began to disperse. Just then the Superintendent of Police came out of the ashram and gave an order to charge the crowd with lathis. That was the signal for an indiscriminate and wild lathi charge. The

road was soon cleared, and then the Superintendent with some of his men came towards the bazar where I was standing along with the other leaders and, on seeing us, though we had done nothing, asked the police to attack us too using abusive words. I received four or five lathi blows but Ramgati Singh, a young volunteer, had rushed forward and interposed himself between me and the policemen and taken on many of the blows himself. Thus my injury was not as serious as it might have been. Baldev Sahay and Murli Manohar Prasad, who were near me, were hurt. Abdul Bari, who was standing a little farther off, was hurt badly and began to bleed profusely.

The Superintendent and the policemen retraced their steps to the ashram. By now the crowd had dispersed, leaving only those of us who had come from other places. We sat down in a meadow awaiting the evening train for Bhagalpur. A local doctor came to us and dressed our wounds. Suddenly we saw the Superintendent and his men coming towards us. We were expecting more trouble but he stopped short and sent a police officer who arrested Patal Babu and took him away. Then we took the train to Bhagalpur where I stayed for two days.

Bhagalpur was the biggest centre for the foreign cloth trade in Bihar. While foreign cloth stocks were being sealed in other places, Bhagalpur had not stirred. Now the news of the Bihpur satyagraha electrified Bhagalpur too. Women volunteers began picketing foreign cloth shops. The traders came to me and expressed their willingness to seal their cloth stocks. A committee was formed and in a few days the entire stock with the business community there had been sealed and put away in a godown. Our aim was accomplished without any trouble, thanks to the Bihpur satyagraha.

The two M.L.A.s, Anant Prasad and Kamleshwari Sahay, who had come along with me to Bihpur, though they escaped the attentions of the police, were pushed about a great deal. They were outraged by the fact that the police had attacked a crowd which had started dispersing and anyway would have dispersed in a short time. Further, they said that there was even less justification for attacking us. In protest they resigned their seats in the Assembly. This was followed later by some more resignations.

A more surprising development was a rift in the police force. While one section of them did not require to be told twice by the Superintendent to wield the lathis, another section was of the view that such action was unnecessary and, while seeming to obey orders, only flourished their lathis without hitting anyone. When Abdul Bari had fallen almost unconscious and a policeman raised his lathi to strike another blow, it was parried by the lathi of another policeman. A third policeman then came on the scene and hit the policeman for having dared to raise his lathi against prostrate Abdul Bari. This was later confirmed by Abdul Bari himself.

I shall narrate another incident here. The Police Inspector who came to arrest Patal Babu in Bihpur was a resident of Chapra district and a school-mate of mine. We were together for four years in school and passed the Entrance Examination together. When I went to Calcutta for further studies he joined the police service. He had aged somewhat prematurely and his hair had turned grey. When he came to arrest Patal Babu, he had quietly raised his hand to wish me but I kept silent as I did not recognise him. It was later that I learnt his name.

The next day I sent a Khadi worker, Rambilas Sharma of Bhagalpur, to Bihpur to request the police officer there to allow him to collect the spinning wheels, cotton yarn and other things from the ashram and bring them to the Bhagalpur Khadi Bhandar. Rambilas Sharma had come to know that the Inspector of Police was my school-mate. When he went to the Bihpur police station and found that the Inspector was the officer in-charge, he approached him with his request. The Inspector, it appeared, was somewhat sorry for the previous day's happenings. Sharma was bluntly sarcastic. He said that I was sorry that I did not recognise him the previous day when he saluted me. The Inspector's face lost colour and he asked Sharma politely not to say anything more on the subject. A few minutes later, Sharma again reverted to it and stated that I was very sorry not to have had an opportunity of a talk with an old class-mate whom I had met after such a long time. The Inspector was very much moved and again cut Sharma short. He saw that the Police Inspector's eyes were wet.

Even after this lathi-charge, the Bihpur satyagraha continued. The volunteers continued to march in batches to the ashram every day, get beaten up and arrested till the satyagraha was called off as a result of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact some eight months later, in March 1931.

This demonstration of non-violent practice by the people of that area was for me a pleasant surprise. Like other *Diara* people, they are a brave and determined sort. Long ago when a Britisher hired a number of Gurkhas and terrorised the locality, the people had killed all of them, about 25 in number, in one night and their bodies thrown in the swollen Ganga could never be traced nor the culprits apprehended.

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Behind Bars

ON my return from Bhagalpur I heard in Patna that a warrant of arrest had been issued against me. Unconcerned, I continued my tours as before and nothing happened. I was constantly on the move and the District Magistrates felt somewhat relieved when I left their districts as none of them wanted to take the responsibility of arresting me. Then Vithalbhai Patel came to Patna. He had endeared himself to the people by his resignation of the Central Assembly Presidentship. A public meeting was called in the evening to which Hasan Imam came, for the first time, in khadi dress. When I told him that I somehow felt that my arrest would not be long delayed, he assured me that the work would not suffer even if I were to be arrested. Only that morning had Motilal Nehru been arrested.

I then left Patna on a three-day programme in Chapra district. After spending the first night in Zeradei and fulfilling my second day's schedule, I arrived in Chapra at midnight. I heard that my brother was not in town and that the police had been waiting for me at my brother's place till eleven in the night. I knew that my turn had come. I had my dinner and went to bed. The next morning I left for a place called Garkha where I was to address the day's first meeting. The police were apparently aware of my plans because on the way a car overtook mine and stopped it. A police officer got down and informed me that I was under arrest and that if I wished I could meet my relatives before I was taken away. So I went home, informed my people and in half an hour was ready to follow the police. I was taken to the Chapra Jail.

There were about 400 satyagrahis in the Chapra Jail. Somehow they appeared to have heard of my arrival and when I entered the outer gate they rushed to the inner gate, shouting slogans. The embarrassed jailor would not open the inner gate to let me in. When I told him that they might calm down once I was in, the jailor, a stickler to rules, replied that it was

against regulations to open the inner gate when the prisoners were nearby. It took some time to persuade the jailor to open the gate. When I entered, I had a tumultuous welcome but the satyagrahis calmed down soon and after accompanying me up to my barracks, they took leave of me.

Meanwhile we heard a great uproar outside the jail. There was a double-storeyed barrack and we went to the upper floor to see what the trouble was about. We saw a big crowd surging towards the jail. In his nervousness, the jailor ordered the warders to open fire on the crowd. The warders did so, but as they only fired in the air, none was hurt and the crowd only went round the jail and dispersed. We learnt later that the District Magistrate took the jailor to task for having run the risk of precipitating a major disturbance by opening fire on the crowd — and that without the permission of the Magistrate.

This was my first experience of jail life. At that time there was no classification of prisoners, and no instructions had been received about me. I was served my food on an iron plate and I accepted it without a demur. My brother sent my meals from home and the jailor told me that since I was only an under-trial prisoner I could take meals sent by outsiders provided that I took them at the gate. In any case, I would have declined the offer but his condition made me say "No" instantly. The next day, some of my friends came to me in connection with my trial which was going on inside the jail. They brought some mangoes sent by my family. The jailor insisted that I go to the gate and eat them there. I refused and sent the mangoes back as he would also not agree to giving them to anyone else.

The Magistrate to whom my case went up for hearing was known to me. He had been my client while I practised as a lawyer in Patna. As I had nothing to offer by way of defence, he sentenced me to six months' imprisonment under a section of the Penal Code.

After the trial, for five days my position was uncertain. I did not know where I was to be lodged but I knew that prominent leaders of the province were kept in the Hazaribagh Central Jail. Then one evening the jailor came and told me while I was strolling in the courtyard that the District Magi-

strate had come and wanted to see me at the gate. When he saw me coming, the District Magistrate turned and moved to the outer gate. When I approached it, that gate was opened to let me pass and was closed behind me. The Magistrate was there and he told me that I should get ready to leave at once. When I wanted to bring my kit he replied that it would not be necessary and asked me to get into the waiting car. I stepped into the car and we set off at a rapid pace. The blinds were drawn and I had the experience of travelling in *purdah.*

The Magistrate directed the driver to go westwards. When I asked him our destination, he replied that I would soon know. The car apparently passed the railway station and after some time the blinds were lifted. I saw that we had passed the city limits. The Magistrate then told me that I was to go to Hazaribagh Jail by rail and car. He apologised for the rough journey I might have to undertake but he said that they had tried to reduce my inconvenience by arranging for a saloon for the railway journey. He then outlined the route I was to take.

We reached Manjhi on the banks of the Saryu on the Chapra-Banaras line. I found there that a Deputy Magistrate had followed us with my kit. The Superintendent of Police was waiting on the platform for me and took me to the saloon. He asked me not to speak to anyone or disclose my identity. I said I would not certainly do so myself but what was I to do, I asked, were I to be recognised — at which he merely laughed. Anyway he had not much to be worried about as our saloon was at the tail end of the train.

The train moved on and the Superintendent began conversing with me in a friendly manner. We reached Banaras in the small hours of the morning and we detrained there and took a car, that was waiting for us, to Moghul Sarai. There the Superintendent took me to the Refreshment Room but I declined to have my breakfast as I was not yet ready for it. Then the train arrived and in the saloon I had my bath and then breakfast. At the Sone East Bank station, the Superintendent of Gaya District took over. He put me in a car and placing me under the charge of an Inspector of Police, left. The Inspector and I motored to Hazaribagh, reaching there at one in the afternoon.

In Hazaribagh Jail I was billeted with some friends. They were somewhat surprised to hear about my round-about journey. I told them that the District Magistrate of Chapra told me that it was meant to avoid crowds at Chapra, Sonepur, Patna and Gaya stations. Further, I repeated what the Inspector of Police had told me regarding his instructions not to stop the car anywhere and to speed up the car in Aurangabad where the road passes through the town.

After I left Chapra Jail, the other inmates came to know of my transfer when the Deputy Magistrate came to collect my kit and began demonstrating against my being taken to some unknown place. Somehow they sent word to my brother, who immediately took his car and went to the Chapra railway station. When he was told that I had not taken the train there, he motored to Sonepur station and getting no news of me returned home disappointed. How was he to know of my route and that I had travelled westwards to Banaras instead of going eastwards? When he later learnt that I was in Hazaribagh Jail, he came to see me there.

The jailor of Hazaribagh Jail, Narain Prasad, a fine and intelligent man, was known to me from school days. His elder brother was my classmate and I had often visited their house in Chapra. He lodged me with friends like Ram Dayalu Sinha, Sri Krishna Sinha and Bipin Bihari Verma. Deepnarain Singh and Swami Bhawani Dayal of South Africa fame later joined us. I spent my time mostly in reading and spinning. Some time later, with the jailor's permission, I joined the jail workshop and learnt weaving. In the six months I was in jail I wove about 200 yards of *nawar,* which I brought out with me when I was released, and 15 yards of cloth.

We suffered no inconvenience at all in the jail. Friends lodged in other wards used to meet us often with the permission of the jailor. We had some difficulty in getting books which were not given to us unless they were 'passed' by the police or a magistrate. The officer who was entrusted with this job did not appear to be a well-read person and had a unique criterion for 'passing' a book as safe. He would not pass a book which had either the word 'politics' or 'political' on its cover. On the other hand, even those books which would be considered by knowing police officers as very "objectionable"

were passed on to us if they did not have on the cover these words. To give an instance, which was joked about somebody asked for a college textbook of economics entitled *Textbook of Political Economy*. The authorities refused to pass it because of the word " political " in the title. But they saw no objection in approving *A.B.C. of Communism* and *Theory of the Leisure Class*. I do not know on what grounds they approved the first book, but I have a shrewd suspicion that the second was possibly approved because the censor thought that it dealt with matters of interest to the leisured classes.

I wanted to compile a book of all the articles written by Gandhiji at various times on various subjects in the newspapers. Such a work had already been published by a Madras publisher with a foreword by me but I thought it would be better if I could publish separate books on different subjects, with short introductions. I classified the writings under different heads like Non-violence, Swaraj, Satyagraha, Education, Khadi and then prepared brief introductions for each. I then selected the articles which my friends kindly copied out for me. When the manuscript was just ready I was released. I, however, got no time to publish the volumes, although Gandhiji approved of the idea, saying that a similar work had been published in Gujerati. Many friends like Nibaranchandra Das Gupta of Purulia liked the idea. He made some suggestions in this behalf which I accepted. But the manuscript never went to press. It lay in the Sadaqat Ashram and when in 1932 we were arrested and the Ashram was attacked and taken possession of by the police, it was lost for all time.

Besides learning cottage industries in jail, we got time to read a lot of religious literature. Pandit Bharat Mishra of Chapra and Pandit Vishnu Dutt Shukla, who were with us, recited the *Ramayana* and other scriptures to us. For the first time I read the principal *Upanishads*. Swami Sahajanand lectured on the *Gita* but I could not attend his lectures for want of time. With Nibaranchandra Das Gupta, with whom I developed an intimacy, I studied Patanjali's *Yog Sutra*, which made me realise how scholarly he was and how he had tried to follow the yogic principles of life. A simple and self-sacrificing man, he looked upon Gandhiji's agitation not merely as a political struggle but as a religious renaissance.

Unfortunately, he contracted tuberculosis and died some time after his release.

There were occasional friendly competitions among the inmates. Some people brought out a handwritten monthly journal which they called *Qaidi* (prisoner). Some others then published another monthly called *Karagar* (prison), in which the editor made the point that while prisoners came and prisoners went, the *karagar* went on for ever. Articles connected with the political movement formed the main content of these journals. Some issues contained sketches and cartoons prepared by Kalika Kumar Sinha. Once a special issue was produced in which all the prominent prisoners were asked to give an account of the progress of satyagraha in their respective districts. I should think that these handwritten journals would provide excellent material for a history of the national movement in Bihar. I wonder if it is possible to trace these journals today. Among the contributors and organisers of the journals were Swami Bhawani Dayal, Mathura Prasad Sinha, Ram Briksh Benipuri, and Mahamaya Prasad.

In the beginning we were not supplied with newspapers. But in the jail one somehow got anything one wanted, provided one knew the trick. One or two secured some newspapers which they would read and then pass on the news to the others by word of mouth. Every day we used to wait for the human newspapers; we were never starved for news. Soon after I came in, however, Government began to supply us with newspapers. But the concession was one that was grudgingly given and hence what we got was the overseas edition of the *Statesman*. It contained only material that was of interest to foreign readers and none that interested political prisoners like us.

Despite the fact that I have toured my province a great deal and thus had opportunities of meeting many people from all walks of life, I should say that I never came to know people as intimately as I did in the jail. I shall ever cherish the memory of those contacts I had in the Hazaribagh Jail. Swami Bhawani Dayal, Nibaranchandra Das Gupta and Thakur Nawab Singh were some of them. The Thakur joined the non-co-operation movement under the Mahatma's influence in the district of Muzaffarpur, with his sons, nephews

and grandsons. A prominent man in Sitamarhi sub-division, he took over the direction of the movement there. Though without modern education, he was a very intelligent and sharp-witted man. He and his son were my constant companions in jail.

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Pandit Motilal Nehru Passes Away

A FEW days after I entered the Hazaribagh Jail, the idea of convening a Round Table Conference in London was mooted. Liberal leaders wanted the participation of the Congress and, with a view to facilitating this, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. M. R. Jayakar made compromise proposals. As a result of their efforts, in order to arrange top-level discussion in the Congress, the Government transferred Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Syed Mahmud from the Naini Central Jail to Poona where Gandhiji had been kept. The compromise move, however, failed and the first Round Table Conference was held in London on November 13, 1930 without the Congress. I remember how avidly many of my colleagues in Hazaribagh discussed the compromise proposals. There were a few opposed strongly to any compromise unless the Congress demand for freedom was conceded but most of them were keen on some settlement and felt unhappy when the talks failed.

Immediately after coming out of jail, I went to Bombay, which played a central role in the Congress agitation, and met several leaders, including Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. There were frequent public meetings in Azad Maidan which were broken up by the police with the help of their lathis. To tend the injured, the Congress erected temporary hospitals. The cotton market remained closed for a number of days and normal life in Bombay was dislocated.

In Bihar, the anti-chaukidari tax campaign had been launched and the Government as usual tried to put it down with an iron hand. To realise a few annas as tax, it did not hesitate to auction or destroy property valued at hundreds of rupees. In some instances, villages which had stopped payment of the tax were looted. In a village which was part of our own zamindari, the police shot one man dead and belaboured many others. In another village I saw myself how the police entered houses, broke the inmates' pots and pans and other household effects and destroyed stocks of food

grains. I witnessed the scene in a village after the police had pillaged it; there was not a single earthen pot to keep water in and not a piece of rope with which water could be drawn from the well.

Innumerable instances like this can be cited. The policy of repression was in full swing, and the police once unleashed knew what to do. When the Government found that the people were not afraid of going to jail, it started imposing fines, for the realisation of which no method was considered too harsh. In one case, however, the Patna High Court decided that to realise a fine from a member of a joint Hindu family, the joint property could not be auctioned. This restrained the hands of the Government a little but the looting and destruction of property on the pretext of realising fines continued on a large scale. But the no-tax campaign did not slacken a bit.

From Bombay, I went to Allahabad to see Motilal Nehru who had just been released owing to ill health. He had just returned from Calcutta where he had gone for treatment. Despite his condition, he continued to shoulder the burden of directing the satyagraha campaign. He wanted to convene a meeting of the Working Committee with such of the members as were free, but since the Government had declared the Congress Working Committee and several other provincial committees illegal, an official meeting was impossible. So invitations were sent secretly to members for a meeting in Allahabad. Unfortunately, a member from Lahore was searched by the police and the invitation was found on his person. We felt that the Working Committee would be arrested at the meeting, as had happened before.

Meanwhile, the first Round Table Conference concluded its deliberations. It tentatively decided that India should have a federal form of Government consisting of British Indian provinces and the Indian States and that responsible government should be introduced at the Centre upon the establishment of such a federation. This offer was contained in the valedictory address of the British Premier, Ramsay Macdonald. It seemed from his speech that the British were anxious to make yet another effort to persuade the Congress to join the Conference. On reading the speech, Motilal Nehru decided

that members of the Working Committee should now be asked openly to meet at Allahabad to consider the speech of the British Prime Minister. He was not afraid of arrests since, he said, our avowed object was to consider Macdonald's offer.

The Working Committee met and after a prolonged session decided to reject Macdonald's offer as inadequate. A resolution to the effect was drafted and Motilal Nehru wanted its immediate publication as, he said, people might get the impression that a compromise move was afoot. Then, at my suggestion, it was agreed that the resolution should be released to the press the next morning, after going through it once again. The same night, Motilal Nehru received a cable from V. S. Srinivasa Sastry, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. Jayakar from London requesting the Working Committee not to take any final decision till they had met it and stating that they were leaving for India immediately. The next morning Motilal Nehru showed me the cable and asked me to withhold the publication of the resolution and instead to issue a statement that the Congress resolution was ready but it had been withheld in view of the cable from Sapru and his friends.

The Government released all the members of the Working Committee. Gandhiji came straight to Allahabad and others were also called there and talks started. In the meantime, Motilal Nehru's health was fast deteriorating and for this reason Jawaharlal, who was still serving his term of imprisonment, was released on *parole*. Motilal Nehru's ailment was not a simple one and his refusal to take rest and his insistence on attending the Working Committee meetings and drafting the resolutions till late at night certainly aggravated his trouble. I had the good fortune to live with him at Swaraj Bhavan during his last days. I had occasion to see at close quarters his forbearance, his great intellectual abilities and his burning patriotism. He had no thoughts for anything but the national movement and the future of India. It is no exaggeration to say that he had no time to think even of his health.

Kaviraj Shyama Das Vachaspati, a great ayurvedic physician of Calcutta, insisted in vain that Motilal Nehru should take rest. One day when Motilal Nehru's condition grew serious, it was decided to take him to Lucknow for treatment.

His face was swollen and at the time of his departure, when we went to bid him goodbye, he joked, " Look at my face, I am going to take part in a beauty competition." The remark drew forced smiles from our gloomy faces. We wondered if we would ever see him again. Our forebodings turned out to be correct and Pandit Motilal Nehru passed away as soon as he reached Lucknow. I had just reached Patna when I heard the news. Immediately I left for Allahabad but the body was cremated before I could reach the place.

The country was stunned by the blow. Condolence meetings were held everywhere. It is impossible to express the feeling of loss which every Indian felt. Our sorrow was all the more poignant because a meeting of the Working Committee had just been convened to consider the situation in the country and to negotiate with the Government. India was deprived of the wise counsels of an experienced and farsighted leader at a very critical juncture.

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Gandhi-Irwin Pact

THOSE who attended the Round Table Conference met the members of the Congress Working Committee and, after giving the gist of the conclusions reached there, indicated that the British Government would like the Congress to take part in further proceedings of the Conference in order to come to an agreed settlement. While the Working Committee was discussing the possible lines of compromise, Mahatma Gandhi was very keen that the Government should agree to an impartial inquiry into the excesses committed by the officials in suppressing the satyagraha movement. But the Viceroy would not hear of it. To us who were assembled in Allahabad, it appeared that the negotiations were doomed to failure as the Mahatma was adamant. When the suggestion was made that he should meet the Viceroy, he emphasised that the inquiry should be held. Ultimately, however, he himself wrote a letter to the Viceroy expressing a desire to see him. Lord Irwin agreed and invited Gandhiji to Delhi.

With Gandhiji, all the members of the Working Committee went to Delhi. We all stayed with Dr. Ansari. Gandhiji's talks with Lord Irwin lasted nearly twenty days. Sometimes he was in the Viceroy's House the whole day and Mira Ben used to take his food there. Sometimes he returned very late in the night. On his return he would report to the Working Committee, whatever the hour of day or night, waking us up if necessary.

Large areas of arable land had been confiscated in Gujerat after the no-revenue campaign there. Vallabhbhai Patel insisted that the return of the land to the cultivators should be a condition of the compromise proposals, but the Bombay Government was not at all agreeable. Eventually, it was agreed that an inquiry should be instituted on the issue. Because he started the salt satyagraha, Gandhiji was anxious to secure some concession for the poor on the question of the supply of salt. Jawaharlal was not at all satisfied with the trend of the negotiations, saying that the kind of compromise

contemplated would only take the country backward, while others considered an honourable compromise advantageous.

One day while talking to Gandhiji during his morning walk, I said that he should do something and have such a compromise as would have the look of a victory and not of defeat. Gandhiji laughed and said that a compromise could not convert a defeat into a victory or *vice versa*. Compromise or no compromise, if we won a victory, it would be felt by the people but if we were defeated, the compromise would not be able to cause elation among the people. The terms of the compromise were debated by the Working Committee for several days.

After patient negotiations Gandhiji and Lord Irwin prepared the final draft. One day when the Working Committee was discussing the final draft, a member detected a flaw. He found a sentence in it capable of double meaning. Gandhiji also now felt that the sentence could give a false impression. He mentioned the matter to the Viceroy but meanwhile the draft had been sent to London and the British Government's approval had been obtained. Lord Irwin was in a quandary. After a great deal of negotiations, however, he agreed to amend the sentence to satisfy Gandhiji. Except for Jawaharlal Nehru, every member of the Working Committee now welcomed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Gandhiji tried his best to convince Jawaharlal but without success.

While the negotiations were on, satyagraha continued but the tempo had relaxed. Serious incidents were, however, reported from many places and Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy who promised to look into them. As soon as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed, the Working Committee issued instructions to the provincial committees to stop the satyagraha forthwith, while the Government, on the other hand, lifted the ban on the Congress Committees.

Just at this time the marriage of my younger son, Dhananjaya, was arranged and my brother fixed a date for the function thinking that by that day the Delhi negotiations would have concluded. But unexpectedly the talks were prolonged and it appeared that they might last till almost the day fixed for the marriage. I wrote to my brother saying that I would join in the festivities if the talks were concluded

earlier, otherwise they should carry on without me. Luckily, the Pact was signed two days prior to the marriage day and I was able to reach Zeradei in time. Thinking that all my satyagrahi friends in the Hazaribagh Jail would be released, I sent invitations to all of them but none of them could attend the marriage.

In my opinion, Lord Irwin was genuine about the Pact and wanted to see every one of his undertakings implemented. But the civil servants did not like it and it was because of their obstruction that the agreement took so long to finalise. It was because of Lord Irwin's pressure and the keenness of the Labour Government in Britain that the Pact became an accomplished fact. We thought that after the Pact was signed we would be able to devote ourselves to the constructive programme. But the picture changed. Lord Irwin stayed in India for only a few weeks more and he was succeeded by Lord Willingdon who had been Governor of Bombay and Madras and knew India well. He knew well the feelings of the Services too and he supported them after he assumed office. The official attitude changed with the change in Viceroyalty. Though the Government could not openly break the Pact, it placed all possible obstacles in the way of its implementation.

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was of great importance because it was the first time the British Government agreed to negotiate a settlement with a representative people's organisation. Secondly, the people were offered certain facilities regarding salt. Thirdly the way to the Congress participation in the second Round Table Conference was now cleared. All the safeguards which the British proposed to incorporate in the Constitution to protect their interests could now be examined from the point of view of Indian popular interests. Finally, the Congress accepted the federal concept, a strong centre with autonomous provinces. It was hoped that the princely States would also join the Federation. I felt satisfied with the compromise but the pity was that, like so many of the previous pronouncements, even the terms of this agreement were not carried out fully by the representatives of the British Government in India.

After the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, it was decided to hold the

annual Congress session in Karachi in March 1931. The time was short but Congress workers of Karachi agreed to make the arrangements. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was elected President of the session.

At this time judgment was delivered in the Lahore Conspiracy Case after a protracted hearing. Newspaper reports of the proceedings had created great popular interest in the trial. Bhagat Singh was, *inter alia,* accused of murdering the police officer, an Englishman, who had assaulted Lala Lajpat Rai. He had faced the trial with great courage and had become a popular hero. He was, along with some others, sentenced to death while the rest were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The accused were all young men and the judgment caused deep resentment in the country. Mahatma Gandhi pleaded with Lord Irwin to commute the death sentence on Bhagat Singh to one of life imprisonment. Lord Irwin, who was now preparing to leave India, would not agree. Perhaps, having already alienated the Services by reaching a settlement with the Congress, he did not want to antagonise them further. The result remained in suspense for some time and people kept on hoping that Bhagat Singh would not be hanged.

Eventually, Lord Irwin expressed his inability to accede to Gandhiji's request, but offered to postpone Bhagat Singh's execution till after the Congress session was over. Perhaps the Viceroy thought that if the execution were to take place earlier, the Congress in sheer anger might vote down the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and that the participants in the session might demonstrate against Mahatma Gandhi. But Gandhiji wrote back saying that the mere postponement of the execution would only be deceiving the Congress and the country. The death sentences were carried out before the Karachi session.

The execution of Bhagat Singh and the fact that his body was not shown proper respect angered the people. The youth particularly were indignant and accused the Mahatma of indifferent effort. These people did not understand that Gandhiji had left no stone unturned to save Bhagat Singh's life. Demonstrations were held against Gandhiji while he was on his way to Karachi. At some places black cloth flowers were presented to him and he accepted them without betraying

the least signs of nervousness or resentment. Throughout the Karachi session, public feelings remained at a fever pitch. Though the people were not disrespectful to Gandhiji, they unburdened their feelings at the mammoth prayer-meetings held every morning and evening. The deep agitation of the Congress delegates was evident in their speeches at the session.

The Karachi Congress session was the first to be held in the open air. The Subjects Committee meetings were held under a small covered pandal but the general session which went on till late in the night was held in the open. The Reception Committee was able to economise by not erecting a huge pandal as was usually done, but it had to make lighting arrangements on a big scale. They made an excellent job of it, however, and the Congress session presented a magnificent sight at night. Being the first session after the satyagraha campaign, the people were full of the fact that it was because of the campaign that the Government had arrived at a settlement with the Congress. After the conclusion of the Pact, in accordance with its terms, most of the satyagrahis had been released and a good number of them were present. At the time of the session, negotiations were still going on in respect of the other satyagrahis who were still in jail.

Two main resolutions were adopted at Karachi; the first was in ratification of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the second laid down in outline the programme to be followed after the attainment of independence. The second resolution related to economic freedom, an issue raised for the first time from the Congress platform. Though the Nehru Report had made some reference to the subject, it was the Karachi resolution which gave a clearer picture of our economic aspirations. It was Jawaharlal Nehru who initiated the resolution while Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel merely endorsed it. Even the Subjects Committee did not have enough time to discuss it. In fact, some Congressmen complained that such an important matter had been allotted too little time for discussion. Therefore, the resolution adopted said that all the provincial committees should consider it and a sub-committee, in the light of their views, should submit suitable amendments at a meeting of the A.-I.C.C. which would give it final shape.

The session also decided that the Congress should be represented at the Round Table Conference if the Government invited it. The strength of the Congress delegation was not decided nor were we very clear about our demands then. The Karachi resolution had reiterated the goal of independence and the earlier demands on the kind of Constitution the country should have. It was later that the Congress decided on Gandhiji's advice that he should be the sole representative of the Congress at the Round Table Conference. As nothing was likely to be done, Gandhiji had said, on the basis of the numerical strength of the Congress delegation, it was just as well that the party should be represented by a single individual. If the British Government were adamant, mere numbers would not be able to move them.

After I returned from Karachi most of my time was spent in correspondence with the Government for getting the satyagrahis, still in prison, released. According to the terms of the Pact, we had to suspend the satyagraha, and this we did by a public announcement as well as by instructions to the Congress committees. The Government machinery, on the other hand, moved very slowly, and after Lord Irwin's departure, things did not move smoothly at all. Mahatma Gandhi, and the Congress President, Sardar Patel, wrote to the Government of India on all-India issues while the provincial Congress committees corresponded with the respective provincial Governments on provincial issues. In our province, I met the Chief Secretary and the Governor. Our efforts met with some success, but the slow governmental processes thoroughly disgusted us. We felt that simple and indubitable issues were being complicated and rendered controversial.

A few weeks later, the Congress Working Committee met in Bombay to discuss the question of Hindu-Muslim unity. After the 1928 Calcutta Congress, a number of Muslims had left the Congress and formed an organisation of their own and had begun putting forward their demands. Jinnah had already formulated his fourteen points. We thought that it was essential that we should have clear-cut views on the issue before participating in the Round Table Conference. I fell ill and could not participate in the meeting though I was putting up in an adjacent room. The Working Committee

decided that the Congress would arrive at an agreement with the minorities provided the terms of the agreement did not run counter to our national aspirations. If, on that basis, all the parties could evolve a common agreement, the Congress also would accept it. The main points that an agreement should contain were also mentioned in the Working Committee's resolution, and it was accepted by the Muslim members of the Committee, who, in fact, had called for such a resolution. They wanted that, like other parties, the Congress should also put forth its proposals explicitly so that the country in general and Congressmen in particular could know the position and uphold the party stand whenever an occasion arose.

A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was called to consider the fundamental rights resolution of the Karachi Congress. The sub-committee set up there had prepared its report on the basis of the reports received from the provincial committees. No major alteration was suggested and with minor changes the original resolution was finalised and adopted by the A.-I.C.C.

The A.-I.C.C. also took up for consideration the question of the National Flag. The Congress came to have a flag in 1921 but it had never been adopted officially. It consisted of three strips in three colours, red at the bottom, green in the middle and white at the top and in the centre was the spinning wheel. Gandhiji explained the significance of the three colours to the people who accepted it. The red colour represented the Hindus and as they were in a majority the colour formed the base of the flag. After them came the Muslims, who were represented by green. White stood for the rest of the people. As we stood for achieving independence through non-violence, the insignia of the spinning wheel was placed in the middle. The Sikhs were not pleased with the flag and demanded a separate colour to represent them. They had taken part in the national movement and formed an important minority. Although as a matter of fact the Sikhs were historically an offshoot of the Hindu community and the Hindu Mahasabha looked upon them as such, they insisted on being treated as a separate community. A sub-committee was set up to decide the issue. As a result of its recommendations, the national flag,

though it remained a tricolour, underwent a transformation. The base became green, the middle white and the top saffron. The colours did not represent any community any more but certain qualities. The saffron colour was chosen because of its elegance, but the Sikhs liked it as it was their colour. They gladly accepted the changed flag.

I toured several districts of Bihar in the course of 1931 with a view to encouraging the people to take to the constructive programme and I met with great success. In contrast to my 1921 tour in Santhal Parganas where, on account of the Government's repressive policy, I could hardly find a host in the area, on the present occasion I received an enthusiastic welcome at even the remotest village of the district I visited. At Pakur railway station where I detrained one day at 9 p.m. I found the whole place tastefully illuminated. I was taken out in a procession to the residence of the principal landlord of the place who was my host. I toured the whole district in his car.

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Gandhiji at the Round Table Conference

THE second Round Table Conference was approaching but the Gandhi-Irwin Pact had not been fully implemented. One of the conditions, which was yet to be fulfilled and on which Sardar Patel laid great emphasis, was the demand for inquiry into the confiscation and auctioning of land in Gujerat villages during the satyagraha campaign. The Government argued that the task was difficult and complicated. Mahatma Gandhi was tired of writing to the Government about it. He went to Simla to discuss the implementation of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Doubts were entertained whether the Mahatma would be able to attend the London conference if the Government was adamant in its attitude to the Pact. There was a strong feeling in many circles in England that the Mahatma must be present in the deliberations. Ultimately, the Government of India accepted all the stipulations made by Gandhiji. As time was short, he left Simla by a special train for Bombay, boarded the ship there, detained specially for him, and sailed for England to be just in time for the second Round Table Conference.

As the inquiry into the Gujerat land affairs began, Vallabhbhai Patel called me to Bardoli, which was the headquarters of the Inquiry Committee. Bhulabhai Desai presented the case of the peasants and the Government pleader of the district represented the Crown. I often attended the inquiry which continued for weeks. Ultimately, the production by the Government of some official records at the inquiry was demanded but the court agreed with the Crown lawyer and the records were not produced. Considering the procedure as amounting to a denial of justice, Bhulabhai Desai withdrew from the inquiry as a protest. This facilitated an *ex parte* report favouring the Government. I had gone to Bardoli to help Sardar Patel but he never needed it for there were a large number of local people to help him. I often discussed with him the letters which he received as Congress President in connection with the implementation of the Pact. After a stay of two weeks, I returned to Bihar.

As Gandhiji reached England, the Government there underwent a change. The Labour Government fell and a so-called National Government came to power, headed still by Ramsay Macdonald. Though styled an all-party Cabinet, it was predominantly Conservative. Sir Samuel Hoare replaced Wedgewood Benn as Secretary of State for India. Whatever little concessions had been expected of the British Government now became a forlorn hope. Gandhiji put forward the demands of the Congress. Though he was given a warm welcome and friendly hospitality, his demands for a satisfactory constitution for India were not met.

Pandit Malaviya and Sarojini Naidu had also been invited to attend the Conference as independent members, but the sole representative of the Congress was Gandhiji. The others were as usual the nominees of the Government and they were so chosen as to ensure that there would be no agreement on any issue. Gandhiji had insisted that at least one Congress Muslim should be invited but the Government would not concede the demand, perhaps because the other Muslim nominees objected to it. In that peculiar set-up, no settlement could be expected.

Instead of achieving unanimity among all sections of Indians, the R.T.C. ended in an informal understanding between the British, the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes, excluding the Congress. When an agreed solution became impossible, Ramsay Macdonald gave his Communal Award which conceded all the demands of the Muslims. This angered the Hindus and the Sikhs. The Award also provided for separate electorates for untouchables and this was vehemently opposed by Gandhiji. He publicly announced that if the Harijans were given separate electorates preventing the Caste Hindus from voting for them and the Harijans from voting for the Caste Hindus, he would oppose it tooth and nail and would lay down his life in his attempt to undo the harm. The British Government which had no intention of doing anything found disunity a ready excuse for its inaction. Most of the Indian delegates did not find it too difficult to grasp the situation. They came together and elected the Aga Khan as their leader and prepared a draft Constitution and submitted it to the British Government. This was rejected and the

Government decided to frame a Constitution on their own.

The political situation which had appeared to be hopeful was fast deteriorating. We saw clearly that the British Government was in no mood to confer any kind of reforms but was waiting for an opportunity to wreak vengeance on the Congress, the cause of all its trouble. The civil servants talked openly of retaliatory action and they found a supporter in Lord Willingdon. It was a period of slump and the prices of food grains had greatly declined. The peasantry was hit hard and found it difficult to pay the land revenue and other taxes. The position of the U.P. peasantry was particularly bad. The situation had begun to deteriorate in 1930 and the cultivators expected the Congress to take up their cause and obtain some relief.

In some districts, especially in Allahabad, a no-rent campaign had been launched, but it had to be suspended after the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The problem was not entirely political, but economic and agrarian. The kisans were not in a position to pay the rent even if they wanted to. The Congress also was in an awkward position because of the Pact and could not support the no-rent campaign, but it was considered necessary somehow to ameliorate the conditions of the peasant and this is what it set out to do, but the Government was the stumbling block.

The landlord was equally keen on realising his dues from the peasants. The Government did grant some exemption in the payment of land revenue but that was not enough. What the cultivators were able to pay was too little to clear the dues to the landlord and wholesale ejectments were ordered to realise the balance of rent due. Jawaharlal Nehru, Purushottamdas Tandon and T. A. K. Sherwani tried their best to secure the sufferers exemption from land revenue payment but their efforts failed, for the Government did not want to do anything at the instance of the Congress because that would, they thought, enhance the prestige of the Congress among the peasantry. When all the avenues of redress were closed, the provincial Congress committees asked the peasants not to pay rent on the plea of inability. But since this step could be interpreted by the authorities as a no-tax campaign

and as the provincial committees were not authorised to give such directives themselves, they sought the permission of the Congress Working Committee to do so.

When the U.P. Congress Committee's request for permission to launch a no-tax campaign was received by the Working Committee, the members felt it to be a serious matter and wondered how far it would be advisable to allow a no-tax campaign in the absence of Mahatma Gandhi and if it were started whether it could be conducted successfully. The question was discussed in all its aspects for a number of days. I was doubtful whether the public would be able to put up with the repression which the Government would certainly unleash against them. Non-payment of land revenue would affect the Government and it could be depended on to meet such a challenge. I repeatedly asked how far the people would be prepared to bear Government repression. My friends could not say anything beyond assuring me in general terms that the people were prepared to undergo hardships.

Sardar Patel, on the other hand, thought that the provincial committee should know the affairs of the province better than others and if it felt that there was no alternative to the no-tax campaign and that the people were prepared to face the consequences, there was no reason for the Working Committee to withhold its consent. Ultimately the Committee agreed to the launching of the campaign though it modified the consent with many stipulations and directed that the campaign should not be launched forthwith and that preparations should be made for it. The Government, which was lying in wait for a chance, gave the green signal to a regime of repression. That the problem was the slump in prices was openly admitted later by the Governor of U.P., Sir Malcolm Hailey, who went to the extent of saying that till the tenancy and land legislations underwent some fundamental changes, the whole social fabric would continue to be endangered. But at the moment, the Government felt that suppression of the Congress and its influence was the need of the hour and it set itself to this task with determination.

The situation in Bengal was also serious. The provincial Government had always been scared of terrorists and revolutionaries and had sent many young men to jail. It never imple-

mented the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and did not release prisoners on the plea of special difficulties in the province. The people were angered by the Government attitude. Meanwhile, an incident occurred in the Hijli Camp Jail where a number of persons accused of terrorism were detained. The warders resorted to firing and a number of prisoners were injured, and a few were perhaps killed. This further embittered feelings. Then a police official was murdered at the hands of the revolutionaries in Chittagong. The Government gave this incident a communal colour. In fact, the terrorists had shot a number of Hindu officers and never made any distinctions between Hindus, Muslims and Christians. They tried to eliminate those whom they considered enemies of the country, regardless of caste or creed. But the Government launched a drive to suppress the Hindu community of Chittagong with a firm hand.

The Provincial Political Conference was held at Brahampur, in Murshidabad district, to consider the situation. It was presided over by Hardyal Nag, a famous Bengali nationalist. Sardar Patel asked M. S. Aney and me to attend the conference on behalf of the Congress. We participated in it and I addressed the conference in Bengali.

In the North-West Frontier Province also, the situation was explosive because the Government had let loose a policy of repression there. As the work of the Round Table Conference was nearing its conclusion, the situation throughout the country had started fast deteriorating. We could see the dark shadow of trouble looming large again on the horizon.

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Renewed Repression

After the conclusion of the Round Table Conference, Gandhiji returned to India, a disappointed man. Meanwhile the Government had resorted to a policy of unmitigated repression in most of the provinces. In the N.-W.F.P. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Dr. Khan Sahib were arrested and taken to a jail outside the province. In U.P. Purushottamdas Tandon and Sherwani were detained. Jawaharlal Nehru and I were going to Bombay to meet Gandhiji. At a small station not far from Allahabad, the police awaited the arrival of the train which was brought to a halt; the police boarded our compartment and placed Pandit Nehru under arrest. I continued my journey to Bombay.

Bombay gave a great ovation to the leader on his return from England. The entire route from the Mole Station to his residence was packed with cheering crowds. Immediately after his arrival, the Working Committee went into session and apprised him of the developments since his departure from India's shores. Gandhiji realised that the Government was now set on a course of repression. The Working Committee passed a resolution on the situation in the country and Gandhiji telegraphed the text to the Viceroy and sought an interview.

We wanted to avoid satyagraha; we were not mentally prepared for it just then but it was clear that the authorities were determined to suppress the movement. Prominent Congress leaders had been taken into custody without provocation. Even before Gandhiji's return from London, the Government had made preparations to meet the possible challenge of a future satyagraha campaign. Now it took the offensive even before a Congress threat materialised. The Government's intentions had become quite apparent; in fact, Dr. Ansari knew almost the text of the Ordinances about to be promulgated! Gandhiji thought that it was necessary to talk to the Viceroy before deciding on any action to meet the Government challenge. That was the reason for his telegram to Lord Willingdon.

On my way to Patna from Bombay, I decided to call a meeting of leaders of my province to discuss the steps to be adopted to meet the repression which was sure to be launched in Bihar. At Itarsi railway station I sent a number of telegrams to *the Bihar Provincial Congress Working Committee* and some members convening a meeting at Patna. On arrival at Patna the next morning I learnt that the telegrams had not been received; they had been intercepted by the authorities. But as some of the members of the Committee happened to be in Patna at the time I convened a meeting. The same night we heard the news that Gandhiji, Vallabhbhai Patel and other prominent leaders had been arrested. We now knew that it would not be long before we followed them into jail. So we decided on the programme to be followed in our absence and made arrangements about the publication of the directives to the people.

Our work was interrupted by the police. When the Provincial Working Committee had finished its discussion and some members had left the Ashram premises, we were told that the police were at the gate. We calmly awaited arrest. A cordon was thrown round the Ashram and the Superintendent of Police entered the hall where we were sitting and asked us whether we were holding a meeting of the Working Committee. We replied that the Committee had ended its session and that some members had already left. The Superintendent then showed us the Government notification declaring the Congress committees unlawful organisations. We were told that we were under arrest and were asked to stay in the Ashram till the police completed the search. They took possession of the Ashram and replaced the Tricolour by the Union Jack. Then followed a search of the Ashram, which lasted a few hours, though nothing objectionable was found. The Ashram was ransacked and the students and teachers of the Vidyapith were ordered out.

About nine in the evening, we were taken to the Bankipore Jail. We were kept in a filthy ward and given blankets for mattresses. *Puris* from the bazar was served as food. We lay there but the stench of urine kept us awake throughout the night. In the morning, the Superintendent of the jail, an English Civil Surgeon, came to us and said that if we desired

we could arrange for our meals from outside. We declined saying that we would be content with what was given in the jail. We took the same food as the ordinary prisoners in the *tasla* (iron bowl). Two days later, we were placed in the upper division and were taken to another ward where we got better food. Soon our trial started and we were awarded six months' imprisonment each. A few days later, we were transferred to Hazaribagh Jail where we stayed till we completed our term.

The arrests of the leaders had been rather sudden and therefore no proper agitation could be organised but those who were free did a fine job. Popular enthusiasm could not be curbed. Somehow, the occasion produced the leaders and they managed the movement quite well. As all public meetings and processions had been banned, it was easy to offer satyagraha. Public meetings, processions, lathi charges and police firings became daily occurrences and the people took them in their stride. They continued to defy the police bans. All offices of the Congress committees throughout the land were taken possession of by the authorities and sealed. The national flag, the target of police fury, was desecrated everywhere but the people always held it aloft.

The Government had launched its well-prepared offensive on January 4, 1932. Undaunted, the people, as before, celebrated January 26 as Independence Day. The police responded with lathi charges, firings and arrests. In Motihari, a huge public meeting was held attended by people of many neighbouring villages. The police opened fire at the crowd, killing many. But the people did not leave the ground, and the meeting continued long after the police had left. The people spent the night there returning to their villages only next morning. A memorial stands today to mark the place where the martyrs fell. There were firings and killings in Tarapur and Beguserai and people exhibited inspiring heroism.

The prisons were filled to capacity. There was one difference between the 1930 agitation and the present one and that was that jail discipline was stricter and life was harder. Not once were we allowed to meet Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Dr. Khan Sahib although they were confined in the same jail with us. We followed almost the same routine as before but we were

not allowed inside the workshop, perhaps to prevent the other prisoners from being infected by contact with us. Instead, we plied the charkha and our yarn output increased greatly. We devoted more and more time to religious books. Besides the Hindu scriptures, we made a study of the Koran, the Bible and Buddhist literature.

A peculiar incident occurred in prison. We had with us Mahamaya Prasad, athletic and well-built, who was in charge of our kitchen in the jail. One day he suddenly complained of feverishness and we did not think it anything extraordinary. But from the next day he appeared to be losing the power of speech. The third day he became completely mute and could express himself only in writing. The Medical Officer of the Jail and the Civil Surgeon examined him but were unable to diagnose the trouble. His term had almost ended and the Government immediately released him and he went to Calcutta for treatment. He tried every treatment possible but nothing produced any result. He was mute for two years. In 1934, he accompanied Dr. Ansari to Europe and consulted a specialist in Vienna. The treatment was effective and he started speaking slowly till, after a few weeks, he gained his full power of speech. Now he is his former self again.

The Congress campaign continued unabated. It was decided to hold the annual session of the Congress in Orissa in March, and preparations were being made there. The Government, which was determined to see that the session was not held, arrested almost all the people in charge of the reception arrangements and sent them to the Hazaribagh Jail. The idea of holding the session in Orissa was, therefore, abandoned. The Congressmen still at large were as determined to hold the session as the Government was to prevent them. At last it was decided to hold it in Chandni Chowk, Delhi, under the presidentship of Pandit Malaviya. The venue and dates were announced.

Thousands flocked to Delhi a few days before the session. Pandit Malaviya was not allowed to reach Delhi and was arrested after he passed Ghaziabad. When the people in Delhi came to know of this, a rumour was spread that the session would now be held somewhere in New Delhi. On this, the police began to concentrate their forces in New Delhi. On the

appointed day and punctually at the hour decided on, however, Congressmen gathered near the Clock Tower in Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi, and began the session. In the absence of Pandit Malaviya, they elected a millowner of Bombay, Ranchhor Das, as president. He delivered a brief address and then the session, in a businesslike manner, discussed some resolutions and approved them formally. Towards the end, the police, who had been hoodwinked, arrived on the scene and started attacking the crowd. But by now, the session had terminated and the people began to disperse. The manner in which the police was deceived made amusing reading the next day and we in the jail enjoyed it. Ranchhor Das, who presided over the session, could not be arrested. Maybe, he was just a fictitious person. He does not figure in the list of Congress Presidents nor has he been made a life member of the A.-I.C.C. as is usual with other Presidents.

The incident proved that the whole country was with the Congress. This wounded the pride of the authorities who started imposing heavy fines on Congress leaders and their sympathisers. All property belonging to Congress committees was confiscated, and their assets in the banks frozen. The Government thought that the Congress had large liquid assets. It is true that in 1921 a big amount stood in the name of the Congress but nearly the whole of it was spent on national education and the propagation of khadi. Since then, the provincial committees had been collecting funds just to meet their organisational requirements. In no case were these funds substantial. The work, however, never suffered because the people were with the Congress and it could depend on getting from them whatever was needed. It was Gandhiji's belief that a public organisation should not collect and own large amounts of money and that collections should always be for specific purposes and made as and when required. This prevented an organisation from getting stultified because, he said, when it lost public support it failed to collect money also. The dependence on public co-operation and goodwill would keep a public organisation healthy and active.

The Government was, therefore, disappointed when it confiscated the property and funds of the Congress committees. There were not any large balances in the banks and the

Government succeeded only in depriving us of the buildings. It was declared an offence to extend financial or any kind of help to Congressmen. Many new restrictive ordinances were promulgated. The public was terrorised, and Congressmen sometimes found difficulty in getting transport or houses on rent. Nevertheless, the public was largely with us and the agitation went on. Though the Congress had been declared unlawful and deprived of its offices and funds, its work did not suffer and was carried on publicly or secretly. Lord Willingdon's boast that the Congress agitation would be suppressed in two weeks' time proved to be mere bragging because the movement lasted two years.

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Gandhiji's Fast unto Death

When I was released after six months, I stayed in Hazaribagh town for a few days because of illness and then left for Patna. Fever had rendered me weak and when I fully recovered I started filling the gaps in my knowledge of the general political situation in the country. I met most of the Congress workers and the A.-I.C.C. members and although I tried to help them I did not accept any office so that those who had carried on in our absence could continue to shoulder that responsibility. I devoted more time to the work of the A.-I.C.C. Later I went to Banaras and stayed with Pandit Malaviya who had been released. Then I proceeded to Bombay and Calcutta and helped Congress workers to collect funds.

When I was wondering whether it was right for me to remain out and not join my colleagues in jail once again, I read one day in the newspapers the report of Gandhiji's fast unto death. Since we had parted in Bombay we had not heard anything about Gandhiji but it appeared he had been having correspondence with the Government for some time. At the Round Table Conference in London, opposing the Ramsay Macdonald Communal Award, he had said that unless the Government changed their decision, he would fight it with his life. On the Government's refusal to accede to his request, he had started his fast. The Government released the correspondence to the press, and it caused great excitement in the country.

Gandhiji was kept in the Yeravada jail. As soon as I learned the news I left for Poona where Rajagopalachari, Pandit Malaviya and such other leaders as were out of jail had arrived. We tried to persuade Gandhiji to end his fast, but he was adamant. There was, however, one hope. It had been stipulated in the Communal Award that the depressed classes would have separate electorates unless an agreed formula was evolved about their representation. This offered an excellent basis for the endeavours to solve the crisis. Depressed classes' leaders were contacted. Dr. Ambedkar, who had attended the R.T.C., was then in Bombay and we approached

him. There was a stalemate for a few days. Meanwhile, the rank and file of the depressed classes were agitated because the Mahatma had done quite a lot for them and they felt that if he died as a result of the fast it would be an indelible slur on their community.

People appreciated the reasons which had impelled Gandhiji to take the step he had done. He contended that the Harijans were an integral part of the Hindu community and for certain historical reasons and because of certain customs they had come to be treated as untouchables. But, he said, he himself looked upon the fact of untouchability as a great curse on Hinduism and was determined to eradicate it. If a Harijan joined the Muslim or Christian fold, he was not treated as an untouchable by the Hindus, although untouchability was practised to an extent in those communities as well. Gandhiji thought that if Harijans were given separate electorates, untouchability would be perpetuated and all efforts to eradicate the evil custom would be set at nought. The depressed classes' leaders, on the other hand, argued that in view of the facts that all rights and power emanated from elections and that elections, in turn, were based on numerical strength, they would be able to derive full advantage from the elections only if they were given separate electorates. That was why, they said, Ramsay Macdonald had laid emphasis on them in his Award.

Many of us were frequently running between Poona and Bombay. This being inconvenient and because of the urgency, we all settled in Poona where Dr. Ambedkar and his associates also joined us. Negotiations continued. We sought and obtained the permission of the authorities to meet Gandhiji in jail. Most of the day he sat on a cot under a mango tree near the jail gate. Rajagopalachari, Pandit Malaviya, Amritlal Thakkar, affectionately called Thakkar Bapa, G. D. Birla, Purshotamdas Thakurdas and others strained every nerve to bring about a settlement. Dr. Ambedkar, Dr. Solanki and others represented the depressed classes. I used to be present at these talks though, as is my habit, I spoke little. As the days wore on, I was anxious lest these talks should prove an unbearable strain on Gandhiji.

One evening, Gandhiji had a long heart-to-heart talk with Dr. Ambedkar and made a fervent appeal to him which

ended in a settlement being reached. It was agreed that there would be no separate electorates and it was decided that a specific number of seats would be reserved for depressed classes in every province. The depressed class voters would have the right to nominate four candidates for every seat; if there were more than four, by their own votes they would select four out of them. There would be polling again and in the second polling caste Hindus would join the depressed classes to elect one of the four candidates. This arrangement, it was stipulated, should stand for ten years, after the expiry of which the matter would be reconsidered. The depressed classes were given a far larger number of seats than the Communal Award gave them. This larger representation was given in accordance with their numerical strength.

After the agreement was reached Ramsay Macdonald was informed telegraphically. We all felt happy. Rajagopalachari, who was overwhelmed with joy, and Dr. Ambedkar exchanged their pens after signing the Pact. Poet Rabindranath Tagore, who did not know that an agreement had been reached, arrived in Poona to see Gandhiji. He reached the jail exactly at the time when the British Premier's acceptance was being conveyed to Gandhiji. It was a very auspicious moment. We who had gathered there began to pray. Rabindranath sang a song and gave his blessings. Then Gandhiji sipped orange juice and broke his fast. The news was received with great joy throughout the country. These developments gave a great impetus to the removal of untouchability.

Gandhiji's passion to end untouchability could never have been satisfied merely with the provision of joint electorates and reservation of seats for the Harijans. He considered these provisions mere palliatives and felt that the real remedy was the complete abandonment of the practice of untouchability and the social segregation of the untouchables. To realise this end a representative meeting of Hindus was called in Bombay where Hindu leaders took the pledge to make every possible effort to eradicate the evil. An organisation was established to work towards this end and the name Harijan Sewak Sangh given to it as Gandhiji had adopted the word "Harijan" for the depressed classes in preference to "Achhut" which he had dropped some time previously.

G. D. Birla became its president and Thakkar Bapa its secretary. This organisation, with branches in every part of the country, has ever since been working assiduously for this cause. Thakkar Bapa, who died a few years ago, was the life and soul of the organisation.

One of the most obvious ways of fighting untouchability, it was thought, was to secure for Harijans entry into temples which had so far been barred to them. It was also felt that Harijans should be allowed access to common wells and other places frequented by caste Hindus but not so far permitted to be used by Harijans. The campaign launched for the purpose led to the opening of many temples to Harijans and many other rights and privileges were gradually extended to them. The Bombay conference set a pattern which was emulated in all parts of the country. Conferences for removal of untouchability became a common feature. Bihar held a conference in Chapra, presided over by the renowned scholar, Dr. Bhagwan Das.

After the Bombay convention was over, Rajaji insisted on my accompanying him to Madras, a stronghold of untouchability. In Malabar, people went to the extent of denying to Harijans the use of roads frequented by caste Hindus. But if a Harijan did use such a road he had to shout all the way in order to warn caste Hindus who might be on the road. In such circumstances the use of village wells and other facilities by Harijans was inconceivable. Then in South India there are huge temples which attract Hindu devotees from all over India. These were controlled in the olden days by panchayats, some of whose members were elected and others nominated by the Government. But later the principal temples have come to be managed by the State. We thought that it would indeed be a great thing if these temples could be thrown open to Harijans.

So I accompanied Rajaji to the south and we tried our best to get the famous Madurai and Srirangam temples thrown open to Harijans. We had discussions with priests who were sympathetic. Public meetings were arranged and well-known pandits were approached. But all our efforts proved infructuous in the case of the big temples although smaller temples which did not have all-India significance were

thrown open to Harijans. We did not lose heart, however, as we were convinced that though the task was difficult it was not impossible. We found that even the people who were thought to be orthodox were sympathetic. On my way back, I visited several places in Andhra, where also the anti-untouchability movement gained ground and many temples were thrown open to Harijans.

Ultimately, our efforts in the south succeeded. In Kerala, the biggest stronghold of untouchability, the Maharaja of Travancore declared the famous Padmanabha temple open to Harijans. Later, in Madras, when Rajaji became Chief Minister, he enacted a law which enabled many temples, including the one in Madurai, to allow Harijan entry. The idea of carrying out the reform by law caught the imagination of the people and the matter was widely discussed among Hindus. We found to our surprise that on this issue some of the South Indian Brahmins were more sympathetic than the Non-Brahmins. The north could not remain unaffected by the agitation and soon many temples opened and sympathy for Harijans was demonstrated by the offer of many concessions.

While still in Yeravada Jail, Gandhiji started writing on the Harijan problem and the Government allowed his articles to be reproduced in the newspapers. All Indian newspapers began then to feature every article of Gandhiji on anti-untouchability. But the Mahatma considered this inadequate and thought that he should have an organ of his own. *Young India* had long ago ceased publication and so he decided to start a weekly in English, with Indian language editions, and named it *Harijan*.

While unprecedented enthusiasm for the Harijan cause was witnessed throughout the country, signs of opposition were also evident among certain sections of the community. The most amazing thing was that a section of the Harijan community itself opposed these efforts. They said that the anti-untouchability movement was only a sham and a show put up by caste Hindus to divert the Harijans' attention from political consciousness. They argued that when the Harijans' lot improved economically and politically, untouchability would automatically disappear. Till that was done, temple entry and other concessions would merely dope the Harijans

into self-complacency. They opposed the use of the word "Harijan" and said that to them the problem was purely political and not social or religious. They thus fed the discontent among the Harijans.

But it was a wild allegation that was made against the Harijan Sewak Sangh because its object was not to impede the economic and political progress of Harijans. The Caste Hindus had already given more seats in the legislatures than what the Communal Award provided. As the agitation progressed, some of the well-to-do Harijans shed their doubts. Some of the educated and politically conscious among the Harijans tried to make most of their numbers. Perhaps they were right in what they did but it was manifestly wrong to describe the temple entry programme as mere sham. There was some discontent among caste Hindus who thought some Harijan leaders were trying to exploit the situation for their own ends.

Discontent found its way among a section of Congressmen too. They felt that by raising a social issue in the midst of a struggle against the Government Gandhiji had diverted attention from satyagraha. They said that this was a time when they should continue their relentless fight against the British and that there would be time enough later to remove a social evil a thousand years old. They alleged that the satyagraha movement had been weakened by many Congress leaders and their followers joining the Harijan Sewak Sangh or associating themselves with anti-untouchability work. There might be some justification for this complaint, but the fact was that many of those who came forward to join Harijan work were not interested in satyagraha. Some of them like G. D. Birla and Thakkar Bapa had never joined it. Many were keen on doing some other public work and when an occasion arose they came forward. It would have hardly strengthened the cause of the Congress if such people were to be in the satyagraha movement. The discontented elements did not realise that the basic cause of domination over us by a foreign power was our weaknesses and the cracks in our social structure. That was why Gandhiji laid emphasis on the constructive programme to remove these weaknesses. The clash of ideas, however, continued; some emphasising the

primacy of political agitation, others, to which school I belonged, believing that once the weaknesses inherent in the social order were removed, all else would follow.

Orthodox Hindus also put up a determined opposition. It expressed itself in violent attacks when Gandhiji later started his tours for eradication of untouchability. In Poona, where the movement could be said to have taken shape, a bomb was thrown at Gandhiji's car. Stones were thrown at other places. In Bihar, where the people were so much devoted to him, his car was damaged by lathis in Devghar Vaidyanath Dham. But looking back today, I can say that we have had a large measure of success in removing untouchability though it cannot be claimed that it has been eradicated completely. Much remains to be done but when we see that the evil custom is centuries old, the idea entrenched in the innermost recesses of our being and the practice sanctified by and made an almost integral part of religion, the success so far achieved need not be underestimated. With greater effort, the citadel of untouchability can be brought down; it is only a question of faith and determined effort on the part of constructive workers.

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Allahabad Unity Conference

On an invitation to participate in the Unity Conference I went to Allahabad. Prominent Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian leaders took part in the conference which was held in Dr. Kailas Nath Katju's residence. Maulana Shaukat Ali, who stayed only for a day or two, and Zafar Ali also attended. Such Congressmen as were outside jail participated in the conference. It conceded to the Muslims almost all their demands but they still insisted on two others, firstly, that they should have one-third of the total seats reserved for them in the Central Assembly and secondly, that Sind, where they were in a majority, should be made a separate province. The conference became a protracted affair, with morning and evening sessions for three weeks.

The Sikhs then came out with their demands. They wanted that whatever the Muslims had been given in the Communal Award and whatever the latter were now demanding should be conceded to the Sikhs also. If the Muslims were to be given representation in the Viceroy's Executive Council, so should the Sikhs. There seemed to be a rivalry between the two communities for more and more concessions. During the prolonged negotiations only on two or three occasions were tempers frayed and a walk-out threatened, but thanks to Pandit Malaviya's limitless patience, the talks proceeded smoothly. While, sometimes, others weary of the never-ending discussions felt like cutting an argument short and deciding the issue under discussion one way or the other or abandoning a controversial issue in preference for an agreed point, Pandit Malaviya stuck tenaciously to whatever topic was under discussion until settlement was reached. Eventually, unanimity was achieved on many issues. Only on the issue of Muslim representation in the Central Assembly, the Hindus offered only 30 per cent and later went up to 31 or 32 per cent. On the demand for separation of Sind from Bombay, no agreement was reached, though an agreed settlement appeared to be in the offing.

The Unity Conference, while it was in progress, created an excellent atmosphere in the country and the people were hopeful of agreement on all questions. On learning that agreement had been reached on almost all points and that on the remaining few also amicable settlement would be arrived at, the Maharaja of Alwar came to Allahabad and addressed the last session of the conference and spoke very impressively. Later events proved that the British Government was more unhappy with him than he with them. He was removed from the *gaddi* and soon after he went to England where he committed suicide.

The conference decided to adjourn for a week and meet again in Calcutta to settle the remaining points of dispute. We had been trying to arrive at an agreed formula to replace the Communal Award, which had left a trail of bitterness. But it appeared that we had not yet understood the British tactics. When they saw that the communities had almost come to an agreement and that only the question of representation in the Central Assembly remained unsettled, the British Government came out with an announcement that it was agreeable to 33⅓ per cent representation for Muslims in the Central Assembly. The very demand which had occasioned so much debate and for finalising which we were going to Calcutta was conceded by the British just before the conference met. It was obvious that the Government did not want the Macdonald Award to be replaced by an agreed solution. So they forestalled the Calcutta conference by making up for an omission in the Communal Award, and the Calcutta talks, in a way, ended before they began, though people met formally, talked and dispersed.

I stayed on in Calcutta for some days to collect funds for the Congress. Though there was sympathy for satyagraha, the rich were reluctant to associate themselves openly with it. Many were, however, ready to help the Congress on the quiet. Some time before the Unity Conference when I was in Banaras I met an old friend in the street. He learned where I was staying and the next day came to meet me. After a while, when he was about to go, he asked me if it was true that the Congress was short of funds, particularly in Bihar and Madras. I nodded my head and he took out a wad of

currency notes from his pocket and thrust it into my hands and took his leave. When I counted them I found that they amounted to about ten thousand rupees! Such contributions were received in Calcutta also.

I had been out of jail for six months and though I had been busy throughout I felt that my place was in prison. I decided to court imprisonment after my return to Patna. I had been accepted as the Congress President or Dictator during this period and I had to nominate my successor in case I went to jail again. At Calcutta I met Rajaji and M. S. Aney who had come to attend the Unity Conference. When I wanted to nominate Rajaji as my successor he declined saying that he was preoccupied with anti-untouchability work. Then I named Aney Congress Dictator after my arrest.

I was in Patna and thought that it would be fine if I were arrested on January 4, 1933. It was on that day in 1932 that Gandhiji had been arrested and public meetings had been arranged to commemorate it. Meanwhile Acharya Kripalani came to me one day and wanted some financial assistance for the movement. I told all that had transpired in Calcutta and gave a letter to a friend. The same day he was arrested at the Patna railway station. He tore up the letter I had given him but the police collected the pieces strewn on the ground and put them together. He was taken to Bankipur Jail where criminal proceedings were instituted against him. I attended the trial and when, after the conclusion of the case, as I was leaving, I was stopped by a police officer at the jail gate and taken inside again. A case was started against me also. Then Kripalani was awarded six months' imprisonment, Mathura Prasad who was also there 18 months and I, 15 months. A few days later we were all taken to Hazaribagh Jail.

Our daily routine of spinning, reading and writing started. The Khan brothers were still in Hazaribagh though we could not see them. After some time we heard that the privilege of writing articles from jail which had been given to Gandhiji had been withdrawn and that he had again gone on fast. The Government had to relent and they restored the concession and ultimately released him. After coming out of jail, to atone for the sins of caste Hindus against the untouchables,

he observed a 21-day fast. We in jail were very anxious for his health and we prayed for him every day in our afternoon congregations. On the day he ended his fast and all was well we had a long thanksgiving prayer meeting.

After recovery Gandhiji called a meeting of Congress workers to exchange views on the political situation in the country. Jawaharlal Nehru happened to be out of jail at the time and joined the deliberations. Not much could we know of this meeting from the weekly overseas edition of the *Statesman* which we were allowed to read. But later we learnt that the satyagraha had been changed from collective to individual. Though many courted imprisonment by this form of satyagraha, we felt that the movement had slackened and that the popular enthusiasm of the early days was no longer in evidence.

By taking possession of our offices, by confiscation of our property and in numerous other ways the Government made it impossible for the movement to be carried on. The organisation had inevitably to function underground. Underground workers kept the Congress alive in the provinces and districts. They maintained the continuity of the satyagraha movement but this change in the method of work could not but affect the morale of the people and, naturally, its effect on the movement was deplorable. There is a fundamental difference between satyagraha and an armed fight. In the first, it is the leaders who have to enter the fray and sacrifice themselves first, leaving the others to follow them, whereas in an armed fight, it is the rank and file who bear the brunt in the battle, the leaders directing the operations from the rear. The rank and file also expect the commander to keep himself safe in order to guide and direct them. But in satyagraha the leader is expected to be in the forefront and his withdrawal into the background, for whatever reason, cannot but lead to the cooling of popular ardour for the movement. This is exactly what happened in 1933.

I would like to mention here the emergence of a new party in Bihar under the aegis of the Government. During 1932 when I was out of jail, it appeared certain that, as a result of the Round Table Conference, India would get some kind of political reforms. In the elections that were to follow, if the

Congress were to join the fray, it was expected to gain a majority in view of its success in the 1923 and 1926 election battles and the further increase in its influence during the satyagraha campaigns of 1930 and 1932-33. The peasants have a majority of votes and they were sure to go to the Congress. The Governor of Bihar, therefore, took steps to forestall the Congress. He advised the zamindars to organise themselves and improve their relations with the peasantry with whom they were often at loggerheads. A new political party, called the Unity Party, was formed. The zamindars thought that while the Congress was busy with the satyagraha they would have suitable changes made in land tenure laws and give some concessions to the peasantry so that when the elections came the peasants as a class would vote for the United Party.

The party accepted dominion status as its goal and adopted some resolutions on the lines of the resolutions of the Liberal Federation. In Bihar there were only two parties to the issue — the Government on the one side and the Congress on the other. There was no middle-of-the-road party like the Liberals. I had some talks with members of the new party and realised that it had been formed only with a view to opposing the Congress in the elections. But the fear did not cross my mind even for a moment that this party would be able to put up a successful challenge. The influence and prestige of the Congress were solely due to its services and sacrifices. How could any other party fight the Congress? A party organised only for the purpose of fighting elections could not but be wrecked on the rock of elections itself because of the inevitable wrangles for seats and mutual rivalries that would ensue. The prospect of the United Party being a serious contender with the Congress in the elections did not worry me in the least.

On the other hand, I did not take its emergence as wholly undesirable, because when the Congress was fighting the Government someone would be there to carry on constructive work of some kind. Perhaps the party might be able to do something for the country. Again, if the new party really gained some concessions for the peasantry, it would be all to the good and when it opposed the Congress in the elections,

the peasants would realise the difference between the aims of the two parties and certainly vote for the Congress. I made no bones about my views and expressed them freely to the members of the United Party. They desired that I should make my views public and I consented. I issued a brief statement to the press that if the United Party followed its avowed aims and objects in its actual working, it would be to the good of the country.

Some of my friends in Hazaribágh Jail disagreed with my views. Even when on arrival in the Hazaribagh Jail I explained my standpoint, they did not appear to have been satisfied. While we were still in the jail, the United Party tried to get the law relating to land revenue amended. My colleagues were agitated thinking that that would increase the new party's influence among the peasants. They wanted the move to be opposed, but most of the Congressmen were in prison and the organisation was banned and could not do anything. They thought, therefore, of reviving the dormant Kisan Sabha. Word was passed on to Swami Sahajanand to activize the Kisan Sabha and expose the United Party's move to give concessions to the kisans. I felt that all this was unnecessary but, as I could not oppose it, kept quiet. Braj Kishore Prasad, who was out, also agreed with my view. The Kisan Sabha, however, began to gain strength and public opinion was created against the United Party's move. But some former workers of the Kisan Sabha favoured the proposed amendment and supported the United Party. The controversy went on for more than a year and was still raging when we were released from jail.

In the first week of July, I fell ill. At first, I thought that it was ordinary cough and cold that would disappear with simple treatment and rest but it developed into an attack of asthma and for two days I was restless and miserable. An injection brought some relief but the moment I swallowed a few spoonfuls of milk, the spasms returned. I felt a sense of strangulation which rendered me almost unconscious. The jail doctor administered some medicines and I revived. An attack of dysentery followed and I grew terribly weak. The Superintendent of the jail was worried and wrote to the Government suggesting my transfer to the Patna Hospital for treatment but

the letter was ignored. Meanwhile my condition continued to deteriorate. My brother was shocked when he saw me and he went to Ranchi and tried to secure my transfer to the Patna Hospital. Eventually, orders came but they were for my transfer to Patna Jail. I said if I was not to be sent to the Patna Hospital I would prefer to remain in Hazaribagh. I was told that I would be sent to the hospital but from Bankipur Jail.

Next morning I was transferred to Patna. My brother accompanied me. From the jail I was sent to the hospital at once and I was placed in the paying ward. My wife, sister-in-law and a servant stayed there and looked after me. Dr. Bannerji, after examination, immediately began his treatment. Dr. Saran and other doctors and friends came to see me. For some days my condition remained grave, but gradually there was improvement. My cough, fever and dysentery subsided. When I was on my way to recovery I was told one afternoon that I had been ordered to be transferred to Bankipur Jail immediately. It would appear that someone had complained that too many people came to see me in hospital and that I was directing the satyagraha movement from my bed. This was, of course, untrue.

Before my departure, Dr. Bannerji came to see me and was very sorry that I was being transferred when I had just begun to improve. He made a report about my case, wrote out a prescription and had talks with the Jail Superintendent, who was also the Civil Surgeon. Under his treatment I maintained my progress in Bankipur Jail. But soon, I had a relapse of asthma and my condition became critical. The Civil Surgeon's treatment had no effect and he sent for Dr. Bannerji who again took charge. The Civil Surgeon advised the Government to send me back to the hospital. When the orders came I told him that I did not like the removal to and back from the hospital and the jail and that I would prefer to remain in jail whatever the consequences. An assurance was given to me then that I would not be brought back to jail till I had recovered fully.

Back in the hospital I found the conditions more rigid and some of the privileges given earlier curtailed. Only two ladies of my family and a servant were allowed to stay; none except

relatives could visit me and that only once a week in the presence of the police. I did not mind these restrictions because I never talked politics with any of my visitors and just then I was too unwell even to sit in a chair.

My ailment was of a more serious nature this time. Even repeated injections seemed to have no effect on me. I had a bad time of it during November and December. I passed very uncomfortable nights when two students of the Medical College would be in attendance throughout. Towards the end of December, the doctors wrote to the Government expressing their anxiety regarding my health. The Government set up a medical board consisting of Dr. Bannerji, the Civil Surgeon and the Principal of the Medical College, to examine me. Usually my asthma tended to subside after December. In this case too, by the time the board examined me in January 1934, my trouble had already started subsiding. After seeing my general condition, the board recommended my release though I was not aware of this then. My term was to expire in about two months, and the Government decided to accept the board's recommendation. One day when I was resting after my mid-day meal I had a message from Sir Ganesh Dutta Singh that the Government had decided to release me and that I would be officially informed of it in a day or two.

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Bihar Earthquake

On the day I received the news that I was soon to be released, I lay in my bed thinking of the changeableness of the authorities. During my second term in hospital they had tightened the restrictions and allowed my brother to visit me only once a week. When my brother's wife was away my daughter-in-law came to look after me but the police objected to her keeping her four-year-old child with her and she had to go away. But now officialdom had suddenly softened and indicated their readiness to release me. I was thinking in this strain, wondering if I should agree to the release and was in a state of drowsiness when I suddenly felt that the bed was shaking. Then I heard the doors and windows rattling. I wondered if I had become so weak that the little strain caused by some concentrated thinking had given me such a dizzy and reeling head, when I heard my brother's wife shouting that the earth was shaking. I realised at once it was an earthquake.

Along with others in the ward I ran out and stood on the lawn opposite. The tremors were so terrific that I found it difficult to keep erect. The tremors were accompanied with gurgling and loud noises, as if a hundred railway trains had started moving together. There were a number of cows grazing near by. They herded together and ran in panic towards us, their tails up. We became apprehensive. It looked they were determined to charge us. Suddenly, they stopped short, just near us, and calmed, as if under the feeling that that particular spot was a safe place for them. The next instant, we saw the double-storeyed residential quarters of the nurses collapse. Because of the din all round we did not hear the noise of its crash but merely saw a column of dust rising as the masonry came tumbling down. Parts of the hospital building also gave way, but fortunately none was killed or injured. After a few moments everything was still.

I thought the tremor must have lasted for about five minutes. Later, the newspaper reports from different parts of the province said that the tremors lasted from four to seven

minutes. It was the first time I had come out of my room since my admission to hospital and had talked to any outsider. Friends from the city came rushing to me to see if I was well. I was told that many houses had collapsed in the city. We saw a number of injured people being brought to the hospital. Till the evening we all stayed on the lawn where the beds had been removed. It was the month of January and as night approached it was becoming extremely cold. I did not want to aggravate my malady by remaining in the open and I went in despite the fact that the walls of our ward had cracked and many people who had gone in had come out again on the lawn. On seeing me go in, some others followed. Adjacent to our ward, was a children's ward, part of which had collapsed. The occupants were evacuated to the lawn and they all slept in the open. At one in the night, there was another tremor which sent us scampering out to the lawn again, but it was a short-lived one and we went in after some time.

The next day, Dr. Bannerji came to see me and while we were conversing in the verandah, we experienced a third tremor. For the first time, I learnt from him that while Patna had suffered considerably, the districts had been worse hit, particularly Monghyr. Fuller news about the extent of the damage was awaited. Monghyr being his home town, he was very worried. He told me that the Government had asked for all available doctors to be kept in readiness to be rushed to the worst affected areas and for arrangements to be made in hospitals for the admission of the injured. I was also told that part of the Civil Secretariat had collapsed and that the resulting confusion was responsible for the delay in my release order. It was two days later that I got the order. The Civil Surgeon told me that I was free to leave the hospital or stay there till I recovered.

As the news of large scale destruction caused by the earthquake in North Bihar poured in, the Government released political prisoners hailing from that area. As I was thinking of how best to organise relief for the afflicted, the released friends came to me to discuss the matter. As, having been arrested in the summer, they had no warm clothes with them I arranged for blankets and some funds and sent them to various places in the Tirhut division to find out the extent

of damage and decide on the nature of relief to be organised there. As means of communications had been completely disrupted, my friends left for North Bihar by country boats. Several days after the earthquake information about the magnitude of the tragedy was still scanty. Whatever little we came to know was too terrible to contemplate.

I was still very weak and the doctors detained me in the hospital. But I would move out and insisted on doing relief work which they allowed me to do. I felt better and better every day; my weakness left me and I began to devote myself wholeheartedly to relief work. After their release from Hazaribagh Jail, Mathura Prasad and Satyanarain Sinha joined me. We decided to form a relief committee with members from all parties and groups. Whenever an emergency arose in the past we had always organised relief work but the problem confronting us just then was tremendous and unprecedented.

The Bihar Governor was also thinking of convening a meeting to discuss matters relating to the organisation of relief. Syed Abdul Aziz, one of the Ministers, met me in hospital and pleaded that we should not start a separate relief organisation but should co-operate with the Government. Shaffi Daudi also came and spoke in a similar strain. They said that while the Government would set apart some funds for relief in addition to what was collected, there was little hope of a large amount of money being collected from the public by the Congress as the organisation was not in proper trim and as many Congressmen were still in jail. I told both Aziz and Daudi that the Government was welcome to organise relief, and as both the efforts were bound to be in the same direction there was no room for conflict. There would be need, moreover, for a relief committee of the kind we contemplated because many people would like to donate money to a non-official organisation rather than to a Government agency. We would make the best possible use of our funds and we would be always willing to co-operate with the Government. There was no question of competing with the Government, I assured them. My friends approved of my stand.

A few days later, a public meeting was called in Patna and the constitution of the Bihar Central Relief Committee

was announced. I was made chairman of the committee. We immediately issued an appeal for funds. Then the Government also convened a public meeting which I attended and they also issued an appeal for funds. As details of the devastation caused by the earthquake appeared in newspapers, there was spontaneous sympathy in India and even abroad for the victims and money began pouring in. Jawaharlal Nehru came to Patna and from there he went to Monghyr and Tirhut areas to see the scenes of devastation himself. He set an example to others by helping in clearing the debris and digging out dead bodies himself. Satish Chandra Das Gupta came from Bengal with money and material. I apprised Gandhiji of the situation. He was in South India doing anti-untouchability propaganda and he immediately issued an appeal and started collecting money himself.

We set up branches of the relief committee in all the districts. We began receiving contributions in the shape of money, rice, utensils, clothes, blankets and medicines from all parts of the country. We stored them in Patna and distributed them to the districts according to their requirements. Very soon the work became incredibly heavy. Many of our workers who were still in jail were released by the Government and they all joined us in the relief work. Jawaharlal stayed in Patna and gave us many useful suggestions about the organisation of the central office. He visited Bihar twice during this period and he was preparing to devote himself to the work fully when he was arrested. Vallabhbhai Patel was in jail and we were therefore deprived of the advantage of the experience gained by him in organising relief at the time of the devastating floods in Gujerat. Gandhiji and Jamnalal Bajaj visited us. From the U.P. came Acharya Narendra Deo and Sri Prakasa.

It is impossible to give the names of all the friends who came to our rescue but I cannot forget the help rendered by J. C. Kumarappa. He was a chartered accountant from the U.K. and before Gandhiji took him to the Gujerat Vidyapith he had a very fine practice in Bombay having as his clientele many big companies. So Gandhiji sent him to us to take charge of our accounts. It would be no exaggeration to say that but for him we would have been in a terrible mess. We had more than 2,000 workers spread over twelve districts.

Few of them knew accounting and the nature of our work was multifarious and separate accounts had to be kept for each kind of work. Our task was assuming formidable proportions but, thanks to Kumarappa, we were able to manage it.

We appointed the Bank of Bihar as our treasurer. All the money we received was sent direct to the bank. We received, on an average, 300 money orders a day and hundreds of parcels containing various articles of daily use. Every item received was entered in our register as were also the despatches to needy places. After some time we brought out our first report, the list of donors covering 400 pages. I requested the public to draw our attention to any omission. It is indeed gratifying to note that I received only a dozen complaints. When we looked into the matter it was discovered that even these were not cases of omission. The names had been printed in the list but by oversight had been placed under the wrong district or province, and this was pointed out to the donors concerned. I was very punctilious in this matter, because one has to be careful in handling public money, otherwise it creates unpleasant consequences. When funds and parcels poured into our office beyond our expectation, I was worried a great deal, but thanks to Kumarappa and his organisation, we can say that every penny and every article that we received was put to the best possible use.

The state of my health compelled my stay in hospital for ten days after my release from jail. As my condition gradually improved, I began stirring out. The pressure of work was so great that I had to begin my day at four in the morning. I had to read reports of damage and relief work. I had to attend to correspondence and issue fresh appeals for help. Abdul Aziz placed his house at our disposal, but the sudden increase of work rendered it inadequate and we had to shift our offices to more spacious premises. We set up many departments, each under a senior worker. Jayaprakash Narayan was in control of the whole office. He was later joined by Anugrah Narain Sinha who took over charge after his release from jail. On the Relief Committee were included representatives of all the groups and provinces which had sent us relief.

After a few days, Gandhiji visited us, but before his arrival I wanted to visit the worst affected areas. So far, partly because of my weakness and partly because of pressure of work, I was tied down to the office in Patna. But as more and more helpers came in and division of work was possible, I was relieved to a certain extent. So a month after the earthquake I was able to undertake a tour. I used to send reports back to my office about the places I visited. These reports were later compiled in a pamphlet. To keep all the donors, sympathisers and workers informed of the developments, we started publishing a bulletin.

In addition to sending help in the shape of money and materials, certain social service organisations opened offices in Bihar and began doing relief work on their own. But they co-operated with the Central Relief Committee and we, while not hindering anyone, saw to it that duplication was avoided. We were thus able to ensure the best use of public money donated either to us or to other organisations. Such organisations were numerous, and while expressing my gratitude to all of them, I might mention the more prominent of them here: the Marwari Relief Society, the Memon Relief Society, Sri Ramkrishna Mission, the party of Baba Gurdit Singh, the Red Cross, the Indian Medical Association and the Sankat Tran Samiti of Bengal under Satish Chandra Das Gupta.

Popular enthusiasm for helping the victims of the earthquake was so great that for some time money continued to pour into both the Government and our Funds more or less in equal volume. The Central Relief Committee and the Government published their daily receipts. With the coming of Mahatma Gandhi and the more or less permanent stay in Bihar of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj for relief work, I felt much relieved.

The difficulties in the distribution of relief were many. All communications by rail and road had been disrupted. Houses were not available at most of the places to accommodate our workers. Drinking water was scarce in many places. By and by, roads were repaired and although bridges and culverts could not be rebuilt, diversions were made for traffic. All means of communication, from bullock-carts to

boats, were pressed into service. The Relief Committee bought motor trucks for its use. Hundreds of cycles were provided for relief workers, for organising and training whom the Committee had to thank Acharya Kripalani, Dr. Hardikar and Miss Sophia Somji. The Committee set up straw huts in many places to house the workers. It might surprise people to know that we never had to spend more than two annas a day per worker for meals.

We had to provide for the immediate needs of those who had lost their houses and had nothing to eat and nothing to wear. Even if we provided them with cereals, they had no utensils to cook their food in and in many cases they had no drinking water at all. Therefore, as a measure of immediate relief, we arranged for the distribution of food and cloth and other necessities, after all that was possible had been done to clear the debris and remove the dead. By the time Gandhiji arrived on the scene, we had almost completed the work of immediate relief. Now we had to take in hand the work of long-term rehabilitation and as we had before us certain plans we had to decide the order of priority to be given to them.

It was not possible for Gandhiji to visit all the places but he went to most of the worst-affected areas and saw the unprecedented and widespread destruction caused by the earthquake. We considered his visit necessary because first, we wanted him to see things for himself and advise us how best to provide relief for the victims; secondly, the sufferers also needed a word of solace and encouragement which his presence readily gave them.

Hundreds of houses had been destroyed. To help people rebuild them was a Herculean undertaking. Then there was the problem of the supply of drinking water. Tanks and wells had gone dry or mysteriously disappeared. Many streams, tanks and lakes had become flat land or mounds of sand. To tackle this problem seemed a superhuman task. The presence of sand in cultivable fields posed another big problem. Large fields where rich, green crops stood were turned into sandy wastes. It seemed as if whole areas had turned desert overnight. We feared the land might become useless for cultivation if we allowed the sand to remain. We tried to remove

it in one or two places, but it proved too expensive and ineffective and we gave it up as impossible.

In North Bihar, sugarcane is grown in a large area and there are many sugar factories there. The earthquake had damaged the machinery in many factories. But the sugarcane crop, worth millions of rupees, was still standing. To help the villagers, therefore, we somehow arranged the harvesting and crushing of the crop in indigenous crushers. With some difficulty, we collected a few thousand crushers and distributed them among the villagers. The Government liked the idea and co-operated in this work. Thus we were able to save a major part of the crop. Luckily, some of the sugar mills also started working after some repairs had been effected, and quite a part of the rest of the crop could be sent there for crushing.

There were many other questions like these to be considered. A general meeting of the Central Relief Committee was, therefore, called at Patna. All the prominent members from the different provinces were invited to attend it. The Committee expressed its readiness to offer the fullest co-operation to the Government. As the Committee was too large and cumbersome, a compact Working Committee was set up. Rules were formulated for the conduct of business. The Working Committee met often to discuss the problems before it and take decisions.

Gandhiji advised us to tackle first the water problem instead of attempting the impossible task of removing the mountains of sand from land or helping to build houses. Accepting this advice, our workers devoted their energies towards constructing new wells and tanks and repair of old ones where possible to ensure an adequate supply of water. We found this undertaking too big for our resources but we did not flinch from our purpose. We got some tube wells bored with the help of some contractors but we found that they would not serve our purpose. First, it was a waste of time as only one person could draw water at a time while six people could draw water from a masonry well. Secondly, the upkeep of a tube well was complicated and the villagers could not understand it. As the masonry well only cost as much as a tube well we decided in favour of masonry wells. We wanted to build as many wells as possible before the rains. Our workers started construction

with the co-operation of the villagers. We got many thousands of new wells built and perhaps an equal number of old ones repaired by July. Many old tanks were renovated for use by cattle. When we had completed this task we were faced with another problem.

77
Floods Follow Earthquake

WHILE the victims of the earthquake were on the way to being put on their feet again, another calamity struck Bihar. Swollen streams and rivers brought floods in the wake of the earthquake. We had feared that the beds of the Ganga, the Sarju, the Gandak and other rivers might have been lifted by sand deposits and had, therefore, anticipated to some extent the new calamity. We got boats and rafts made and kept them ready for an emergency at places usually affected by floods. The Government too had prepared likewise.

The poor villagers of the earthquake-affected areas had enough work to keep themselves gainfully occupied. One can distribute gratuitous relief to people for a few days in case of an emergency, but it is positively injurious to keep them on doles for a long time. Therefore, from the very beginning we had followed a policy of giving relief in the shape of work. Labourers for all kinds of work like clearing debris, repairing and constructing houses and sinking wells were needed. The Central Relief Committee had also an elaborate programme of constructing new wells and tanks and repairing old ones. Besides, we had several hundreds of miles of roads repaired and built throughout the province. The villagers thus found employment readily available, but it was feared that during the floods they would be left without any occupation.

Bhartua, a large tract of hollow land, situated on the way to Seetamarhi from Muzaffarpur, was once a fertile area. It was now water-logged and had been rendered unfit for cultivation even before the earthquake. The cause of this unhappy state of affairs in Bhartua was that the only outlet for draining the water from the low-lying areas had been obstructed by the river Bagmati having changed its course. The only way to bring life and fertility back to the soil was to clear the obstruction in order to provide an outlet for Bhartua's stagnant pools. The water, like the Kosi flood waters, caused even big trees to wither away and die. Gandhiji saw the scene of desolation and was greatly pained.

The Central Relief Committee decided to undertake this task even if the Government were unwilling to help. We, therefore, estimated the cost and then wrote to the Government and at the same time started the work of digging a canal to drain the stagnant waters. Our endeavours paid ample dividends. Life returned to Bhartua as its soil once again became productive. We had several other small canals dug.

Employment was also provided to village women through spinning. We thus combined relief work with the work of propagation of khadi. The Bihar Charkha Sangh took over the areas thus developed. Houses were being constructed in large numbers, and this resulted in an acute shortage of building materials. We had stores opened at several places on behalf of the Relief Committee for the sale of bricks, lime, bamboo, timber and steel at fair prices.

During the monsoon months, we began feeling the effects of the shortage of rice, and prices started rising. We purchased stocks of rice from Burma and distributed them to the Relief Committee's sale depots. To meet and check any possible outbreak of malaria and cholera, the Committee set up a number of dispensaries all over the affected areas. Our work was rendered more difficult during the rainy season, but somehow we managed to maintain our services with the help of our fleet of rafts.

In addition to this, we gave cash grants to many people for repairing their houses. Because of its limited resources which could be better spent in helping the poor, the Committee decided against helping the well-to-do and those who owned big houses before the earthquake. The maximum sum given was Rs. 250. The work of helping the rich was left to the Government.

Two Englishwomen accompanied Gandhiji to several places during his tour of the affected areas. One of them was Miss Muriel Lester, Gandhiji's host in London at the time of the Round Table Conference, and the other was Miss Agatha Harrison, a public worker and a sympathiser of India. Besides these women, many other Europeans visited Bihar to see the devastation and wrote about it to their friends overseas. C. F. Andrews too toured the province and wrote a booklet for circulation in England and America. The result of these

efforts was a surge of great sympathy in those countries for Bihar's miseries and substantial contributions to the Relief Fund.

There is an organisation in Europe which is opposed to war. The members, while rating very high the great qualities of selflessness and courage which a war brings out in men, thought it would be much better if those qualities were diverted for the service of humanity rather than be used for slaughter. The organisation had imposed on its members the discipline of an army. Irrespective of any considerations of religion or nationality, they hastened to do social service and offer relief wherever it was needed. They had experience of organising relief at several places destroyed during the First World War. The leader of the organisation was Pierre Ceresole, a Swiss. An engineer by profession, he was highly connected and his ancestors had held high positions in his country's administration. Since his joining the anti-war organisation, Ceresole had given up everything else in order to devote himself entirely to it. He had also been punished for refusing to take military training. Bihar had the good fortune to have the services of Ceresole who came to the province with a band of workers on his mission of service.

Some places had suffered such damage by the earthquake that we asked the people to settle elsewhere. We prevailed upon some landlords to place lands at the disposal of the uprooted persons and tried our best to persuade the villagers to move to the new areas, but no one was prepared to quit the site of his ancestral home. We then modified our settlement plans on large-scale resettlements. Some villages of Muzaffarpur district were fed up with the yearly visitation of floods and its people agreed to settle down in the places we suggested. We decided to build new villages for them. The Government agreed to help in this project with funds. The building of houses was entrusted to a local committee and the Central Relief Committee nominated Dr. Ceresole to serve on the committee with one of our workers, Phaninder Mohan Dutt, as his assistant.

New villages were brought into being on the new sites within the period of a year or two. Dr. Ceresole remained on the job throughout except for a few months when he

returned to Europe. He and his companions did not hesitate to do heavy manual labour, although Dr. Ceresole, a well-built man, was more than 60 years of age. Bihar's heat was too much for them sometimes, but they gladly put up with it and continued to stay in the villages without any of the comforts and amenities of life to which they were accustomed in Europe. The manner in which these men kept themselves busy the whole day put heart in our people. One of the new villages was named Shantipur (abode of peace). This beautiful village still stands today as a model settlement.

On account of the earthquake and the floods, malaria broke out in epidemic form and the Relief Committee provided medical aid in the area, particularly in the districts of Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Bhagalpur. We were able to do all this primarily because of the enthusiasm of the workers and their devotion to service. Paid workers could not have accomplished as much. From the very beginning, the Central Relief Committee knew that the least amount must be spent on the organisation and machinery of relief and most of it on actual relief. The Committee was fortunate in having a large band of voluntary workers to do the job. But because the work continued for over 18 months, we had to employ some paid workers to look after the office work. On every other item like accommodation and transport we were able to economise to the utmost. Our periodical reports showed the relief and organisational expenses separately so that the people might know how little we were spending on those who carried out relief operations. Transport cost us a good deal in the beginning, but gradually as the Committee concentrated on digging wells and tanks and distributing cash grants for building houses, we were able to reduce this expenditure considerably.

The Government had appointed an experienced civilian, Brett, as Relief Commissioner. He compiled a report of the relief operations, in which he referred to the work of the Central Relief Committee and observed that the establishment expenses of the Committee were high. By the time the report was published, Brett had gone on leave to England. Finding that all the facts about the Relief Committee's expenses in the report were wrong, we wrote to the Government, inquiring

from what source they had got their figures. The Government could not give an answer, the reply said, in the absence of Brett, and they never confessed their error.

When the relief operations were wound up, the Relief Committee entrusted the balance of the funds to a Trust which maintained it as a reserve fund to be used in an emergency in Bihar. It was used occasionally for the relief of flood victims. Later, as the money was lying idle, the trustees, in consultation with Gandhiji, advanced it as a loan to the Charkha Sangh. Sardar Patel, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and I were the three trustees.

78

Satyagraha Is Called Off

By the middle of 1933, the satyagraha movement had slackened. It showed signs of reviving with the switching over to individual satyagraha, but that was only for a short while. The movement slackened again. By this time considerable progress had been made in England in the drafting of the Constitution for India. After the second Round Table Conference, a white paper was published in which the principles of the new constitution were laid down. Many people felt that, irrespective of the shortcomings in the proposed constitutional reform, and irrespective of the fact whether Congress wanted to work it or wreck it, it must fight the next elections. In Congress circles, discussion on the topic was initiated by Dr. Ansari, Dr. B. C. Roy and Bhulabhai Desai. Probably Gandhiji, who was at the time touring Bihar, gave thought to the question. As far as I was concerned, I was much too immersed in relief activities to think of anything else.

Once, during a tour of flood-affected areas, Gandhiji and I stopped in village Saharsa in Bhagalpur district. It being Monday, Gandhiji was observing his usual silence. I found him busily engaged in writing something. In the evening he handed to me a piece of paper and asked me to give my opinion on it. I read it and found that it posed the question of withdrawal of satyagraha and touched on the ensuing elections. He said that his conclusions were based on what some of his close associates had said after their release from jail. In my own province, apart from slackness in satyagraha, the atmosphere had completely changed as a result of the earthquake. No one was offering or intended to offer satyagraha here. Political workers when released from jail devoted themselves entirely to relief work. Therefore, Gandhiji's suggestion did not seem odd to me and I expressed my agreement with his statement. He wanted it to be released to the press. As there were no telegraphic facilities in Saharsa, I decided to send the statement to Patna through a messenger. Before I could do so, a man came from Patna with a telegram to Mahatma

Gandhi from Dr. Ansari. Dr. Ansari had intimated that he was coming to Patna with Dr. Roy and Bhulabhai Desai to have talks with Gandhiji. The Mahatma then dropped the idea of issuing the statement to the press and we left for Patna. After prolonged talks with Dr. Ansari and others, Gandhiji's statement was released to the press. Though many Congressmen liked the decision, they did not feel very happy about the reasons given for suspending the satyagraha.

Gandhiji then proceeded to Chota Nagpur to do Harijan work and at Ranchi he called prominent Congress leaders for consultations. They came from all provinces and the talks lasted three days. It was decided to convene a meeting of the A.-I.C.C. in Patna in May 1934. Gandhiji continued his tour of Bihar till then.

Although the Congress organisation was still banned, no restrictions were imposed on the meeting of the A.-I.C.C. The Government knew that there was soon to be a shift in Congress policy and therefore placed no obstruction. At the session, which opened in Shrimati Radhika Sinha Hall, the official resolution recommended the suspension of the satyagraha movement and authorised only Gandhiji to offer satyagraha. It also endorsed the statement issued by Gandhiji. While some of the members favoured the resolution, others were vehement in their opposition both to the resolution as well as the reasons given by Gandhiji for suspension of the movement. Some who were indifferent to the withdrawal of the movement were against the Congress taking part in the elections. After a heated and prolonged discussion, the resolution was adopted. Among those who opposed it, were the members of the newly-formed Congress Socialist Party. The Party had emerged out of a conference of Socialists held in Patna and decided to function as a group within the Congress with Acharya Narendra Deo, the principal critic of the A.-I.C.C. resolution, and Jayaprakash Narayan as its leaders.

The A.-I.C.C. withdrew the satyagraha. A few days later the Government also lifted its ban on the Congress. Gradually all Congress offices along with their properties were released by the Government. We had to accept them in whatever condition they were returned and did the necessary repairs ourselves. There were no negotiations or discussions between

the Government and the Congress as at the time of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Both sides had clarified their positions by issuing their own separate statements. Jamnalal Bajaj was appointed Acting President of the A.-I.C.C. It was decided to hold a special session of the Congress in Bombay and it came off in October. Many satyagrahis were still in jail. Sardar Patel was released just on the eve of the session while Jawaharlal Nehru was not released till much later.

79
My Brother Passes Away

After the Patna A.-I.C.C. meeting I had to rush home and could not go to Wardha for the Working Committee meeting. A family calamity was awaiting me at Chapra. My brother had strained himself a lot in relief work and it had told upon his health. In May 1934, he had gone to Assam, where, as mentioned earlier, he had bought lands, and on his return he complained of fever. He had contracted malaria there. However, he got over it and when I visited Chapra I found him in normal health. But as he was weak I advised him to avoid strenuous work and returned to Patna. Three days later, I received a telegram saying that his condition was serious and asking me to send Dr. Raghunath Saran. As this telegram was sent at the behest of Dr. Rajeshwar Prasad, Civil Surgeon of Chapra, I became very anxious.

I persuaded Dr. Saran to go to Chapra with me. As we missed the afternoon steamer, we crossed the Ganga in a ferry boat along with my car and then motored to Chapra, which we reached at ten in the night. My brother was being treated by several doctors and Dr. Rajeshwar Prasad used to stay with him day and night. I found that my brother had developed kidney trouble besides fever. His diabetes, which by regular treatment and dieting he had got over, reappeared now that he was weak.

Dr. Saran sent my brother's blood and urine to Patna for examination. Despite the doctors' best efforts, his trouble continued to increase. We called for Pandit Braj Bihari Chaube, a famous vaid of Patna, but his treatment also had no effect. At last the doctors suggested the removal of one of the kidneys. Dr. Rajeshwar Prasad, an experienced surgeon, would not take on himself alone the responsibility of the operation. Dr. Bannerji could not be called for as the Patna Medical College was closed. Dr. Batukdeva Prasad Verma, Civil Surgeon of Monghyr, had a patient in a serious condition to attend to and could not come immediately. We tried to get Lucknow's famous surgeon, Dr. Bhatia, but he

too was unable to come. At last, in response to my telegram, my Calcutta friends sent a well-known surgeon, Dr. Panchanan Chatterji, and Col. Alexander of Patna also came on my request. Both of them were of the view that my brother was too weak to undergo the operation. So we gave up the idea of operation and in two days my brother expired.

I had already called Janardan, my brother's son, and his family to Chapra. My brother's daughter and son-in-law from Lucknow and all other relatives had been intimated of my brother's condition and had hurried to his bedside. So, when my brother breathed his last, he was surrounded by all his family and friends. My brother's death was a heavy blow and in the hour of calamity I turned to the Gita for consolation. I had never taken any interest in our family affairs because my brother had attended to everything. Even when I was practising and was an earning member of the family he looked after my wife and children. They continued to be under his care when I participated in the non-co-operation movement and went to jail. My wife and my sons always stayed with him and I only went home now and then to see them. He treated my children as his own and my sons looked on him with love and respect due to a father. My feelings on the sudden catastrophe, when I was preoccupied with other things, could, therefore, be well imagined.

We cremated him on the banks of the Sarju, a short distance from Chapra, and returned home late in the evening. The next morning we left for Zeradei where the *shradha* ceremonies were held. My brother was a great social figure and public worker and was well-known in Bihar. We were flooded with telegrams and letters of condolence. This widespread sympathy was a valuable support to me in my hour of grief. Mahatma Gandhi's message of condolence gave me great consolation.

After my brother's passing away, family affairs were left in a mess. We had depended on him for everything. Even when I was practising as an advocate in Patna he took care of me and looked to my personal requirements. Whenever he came to Patna, he would ask my servant to check my wardrobe to see if I needed any fresh clothing. He would make inquiries of my servant about my food and my health

and instruct my servant or personal clerk, Maulvi Sharafat Hussain, to attend to my needs. I never worried myself about money. Whatever I could save was remitted to brother. Our ancestral zamindari fetched an income of Rs. 400 to Rs. 500 a month. He maintained all accounts and he met everybody's requirements himself.

My father had left a small debt at the time of his death. Immediately afterwards we had to take a loan for the marriage of my niece. The total debt came to a few thousands. It was nothing much for the estate we had, and it could have been cleared easily with an addition of some regular cash income to the income from the zamindari. My brother was the Manager of the Chapra branch of the Bank of Bihar but his income was not enough for his family. Though I earned quite a lot while practising I spent equally liberally. The debt, therefore, could not be cleared. On the other hand, a loan had to be raised when another niece had to be married. Soon after my aunt died. We incurred some expenditure on her *shradha* ceremonies. But her share of Rs. 1,200 per annum, given to her for her pilgrimages, became a saving. We lived well and the expenses grew. My brother was a man of liberal disposition and was generous to a fault. The burden of debt could not be reduced. He had hoped that my earnings would clear the debt, but when I decided to give up practice, his hopes were dashed to the ground but he said nothing.

He knew of my patriotic urges and he only encouraged me in my predilections. Never for a moment did he think of weaning me away from public work. His dreams of material prosperity had vanished, yet he remained happy and saw to it that others were happy too. As a Bank Manager, he had gained a good reputation and could have got a more remunerative job, but he did not like the idea of quitting the bank in the establishment of which he had had a hand. He was more a builder of his bank than an employee and he worked more tirelessly for the bank than a mere salaried employee would do. Because of this, when he devoted part of his time to public work the Bank authorities did not stand in his way, nor did anybody mind his weekly visits to Zeradei.

To increase his income, my brother started a rice mill. I was so busy with Congress work then that I did not know

of this for months after it had opened. Because of his many preoccupations, my brother could not devote much time to the mill and left it in the hands of a manager. The mill ran short of funds at a time when paddy was required for milling. My brother hoped to clear a tidy sum at the end of the season if money could be raised to buy paddy. I, therefore, on his advice approached Jamnalal Bajaj who readily advanced the amount. The mill began working at a tremendous pace. There was a rush of buyers and the rice was sold even before the paddy was milled. But thanks to the manager's miscalculations, things did not turn out as we had expected. Because of Jamnalal Bajaj's loan, I took some interest in the mill and I went there one day to see its working. When I checked up the accounts I found that the rice was being sold at less than the cost price. I drew the attention of the manager to this but he would not acknowledge his mistake. I told my brother and we went over the accounts and my findings were confirmed. The result was a heavy loss and delay in the repayment of the loan. We could only pay back a part of Jamnalal's money.

We were faced with a serious situation and we were helpless. The demand for money came when we could not pay it. Baijnath Kedia, a friend of Jamnalal, wanted to buy some land in Bihar and he came along with Jamnalal to Zeradei. We had about 70 to 80 bighas (60 acres) of zeerat land within the radius of a mile from our house. This met our domestic requirements of food grains. Kedia suggested that he would clear all our liabilities, which, including what we owed Jamnalal, amounted to Rs. 60,000 to 70,000, if we sold this land and our house to him. The house was built of brick and was commodious. My brother had made additions and raised a second storey on parts of it. Just then most of our family lived in Chapra and we could have built another house somewhere without much difficulty at a small cost. Even after parting with the land and the house, we still would have had an income of Rs. 500 per month from our estate. Therefore, I advised my brother to accept Kedia's offer.

Jamnalal Bajaj advised us to clear the debts lest they should assume formidable proportions. My brother was reluctant at first to part with the ancestral home where all of us were born, but after thinking over matters further, seemed willing

to part with it. Later, because of the opposition of the women of the house and some friends, including Mathura Prasad, he rejected the offer outright and the matter ended there. We saved the land and the house for the time being but some time later the pressure from the local creditors became so great that we were compelled to part with a sizable part of the zamindari in order to clear part of the dues to them.

After the fiasco in the rice mill, my brother wanted to turn to some other business. While I was in jail, although he had no money of his own, he established an electric supply concern in Chapra in 1930. The licence was granted to him personally by the Government and not to the company. He had, therefore, to erect the power house and to lay out the mains and supply lines on his own. He borrowed part of the money needed and the balance was advanced by the company from its share capital. Soon the generator was set up and the company began supplying power in Chapra. Our total liabilities now became formidable. About a year prior to his death he had to sell away, as stated, a part of the zamindari which brought us an annual income of Rs. 2,200. Even this did not make any appreciable difference to our liabilities. On account of the rising family expenses, the debts kept mounting. My brother thought that if all the shares of the power supply concern could be sold off, the major part of the debts could be cleared, but his expectations proved too optimistic. As the power house was not the property of the company but stood in his own name, we encountered difficulty in disposing of the shares.

When my nephew, Janardan, returned from England after training in metallurgy, he got employment with Tatas in Jamshedpur on a salary of Rs. 350. But he had enough only for the expenses of his family and he could not spare anything to help his father. As he had done in my case, my brother kept his son free from all financial worries and never troubled him for anything. It was after my brother's death that a full picture of our indebtedness was revealed to us. He had such credit that people had advanced him thousands of rupees without even a chit for record.

When my brother died, my difficulty was drawing up a list of all our creditors. I did not know who and how many

were the creditors. I had to stay in Chapra for some time. One of the employees of the Bank of Bihar who knew all about my brother's affairs apprised me of the real situation and I was able to contact all the creditors. When I came to know of the magnitude of our total debts, I had a shock because they could not be cleared even if we sold every bit of our property. There were no buyers of land, particularly if one wanted to sell out in a hurry. Such a heavy burden was unbearable for me. I wanted to clear all the liabilities at the cost of everything we possessed, but the creditors would not agree to buy the estate. I asked them, therefore, for some time, assuring them that in a year's time I would be able to pay every one of them. Thanks to the reputation my brother had and the trust I was able to inspire among them, the creditors readily agreed to wait. I decided now to settle this affair after selling the estate and to return to public work only after meeting my liabilities.

The next session of the Congress which was to be held in Bombay was approaching and my name had been proposed for presidentship. Gandhiji was keen on my accepting it. But in the circumstances in which I found myself I did not deem it proper to accept the honour. Mahadev Desai wrote to me on behalf of Gandhiji, saying that the country wanted to show its gratitude for and satisfaction at the work I had done for the relief of the victims of the Bihar earthquake and that I should accept the presidentship. He also said that Gandhiji had some talks with Jamnalal about my indebtedness and would see what he could do about it later. He had perhaps thought that Jamnalal was the principal creditor and wanted him somehow to settle matters.

Jamnalal visited us in our village after my brother's death to offer his condolence in person. He knew all about our liabilities and as he had been to Zeradei he had precise information about our situation. He told me that if we got over our attachment to the zamindari and agreed to sell off the whole of it, our liabilities could be cleared provided, of course, a proper price was obtained. I replied that I was quite prepared to act as he suggested. Telling him of what Gandhiji had written to me, I passed on my burden to his shoulders, authorising him to settle the question as he deemed fit. As there was

another year in which the debts could be cleared, I felt a little free and accepted the responsibility of Congress presidentship.

Meanwhile, my misfortunes did not end. I suffered another shock. My brother's son, Janardan, had come from Jamshedpur with his wife and son during my brother's illness and after his death had stayed on for some time. His son, a fine boy of six, dear to all of us, used to suffer occasionally from headache. I took him to Patna for treatment but he contracted typhoid and, after three weeks' illness, passed away. Coming on the heels of the earlier calamity, it was more than I could bear and I felt utterly miserable.

Jamnalal sent one of his agents to my village to look into our accounts and to get an exact picture of our affairs and to ascertain which of our creditors were prepared to accept land in payment. After the agent had reported, Jamnalal set about the settlement of the debts. Several of the creditors agreed to accept land and others were to be paid in cash. With one exception, all the creditors displayed a spirit of accommodation. Some of them were ready to forgo a part of the interest and many did not charge interest after my brother's death. After a part of the estate had been disposed of, only the debt to Jamnalal and a few others remained. I transferred the whole of the remaining estate to Jamnalal and he paid off the rest of the creditors. As he was unable to pay them all himself, he persuaded Seth Ghanshyam Das Birla to help in clearing the debts. Our liabilities were thus cleared and the zamindari was lost.

Jamnalal had no intention of becoming a zamindar in Bihar. He had agreed to have the lands transferred in his name only in order to sell them and realise cash. Though a legal owner, he leased out the estate to my younger son, Dhananjaya, on condition that he was paid the interest on his investment and, as far as possible, the principal in instalments. I tried to find a purchaser for the zamindari, but the value of the zamindari lands was gradually falling because the Congress Ministry had granted a number of concessions to cultivators, thereby reducing the income from zamindaris. By now my sons were on their feet and we had not to depend for our livelihood on the estate. Partly from my nephew's

savings, partly from my son's income from the estate and partly by disposing of all the old shawls and valuables of the household, we began paying the interest and the principal due to Jamnalal. Every pice we saved we passed on to Jamnalal. A portion of the principal and the whole of the interest was thus paid off. I hoped that in course of time we would be able to pay off the debt without having to finally sell the estate mortgaged with Jamnalal.

Those were the darkest days in my life and I found the debts a heavy burden on my shoulders. Thanks to the tact and generosity of Jamnalal and the help extended by Ghanshyam Das Birla, I was able to extricate myself from my difficulties. During the trying years immediately after my brother's death, for all practical purposes, Jamnalal stepped into my brother's place. As ever before, I became free from the cares of the family. It will never be possible for me to express my gratitude adequately to Jamnalal. I must also appreciate the courage, devotion and affection of my nephew and my sons during these difficult times. The crisis never ruffled them and they carried on their duties cheerfully.

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President of the Congress

THE Bombay session of the Congress was the first regular session to be held after March, 1932. The British Government had published its decision in a White Paper, and was drafting the Constitution according to the principles laid down in it. The Congress was no longer an 'unlawful association', and had to offer its opinions on the draft Constitution. Within a few weeks after the session, the elections were to be held for the Central Assembly and the Congress had to decide on the question of participation in them. The Bombay session of the Congress was, therefore, of great importance. I took these things into consideration in drafting my presidential address. I dealt with the proposed reforms critically and showed the draft to Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, asking him to correct any factual errors it might contain. He agreed with my criticisms of the reforms. I then left for Wardha, breaking journey at Jamshedpur, where I was delayed for a few days owing to an attack of fever and asthma. At Wardha, after consulting Gandhiji, I finalised my presidential address.

The people of Bombay did not get enough time to prepare for the Congress session, still they did everything on an unprecedentedly grand scale. The Congress Nagar rose on the seashore in the open. A huge pandal was erected to accommodate a hundred thousand people. A Khadi Exhibition was also organised on a big scale. Special arrangements were made for the reception of the President. I alighted from the Nagpur Mail at Kalyan. After light refreshments, I received welcome addresses on behalf of several public institutions on the railway platform itself. Then I boarded a special train for Bombay.

On the way, huge crowds greeted us wherever the train stopped and we travelled to Victoria Terminus in great pomp. My carriage was filled with flowers and garlands and innumerable presents. The rush at the station was so great that to walk to the exit became a problem. A four-horse carriage had been arranged for taking me out in a

procession. I was very weak but I could not disappoint the people and the Reception Committee. Therefore, along with my wife, Sarojini Naidu and K. F. Nariman, I boarded the carriage and the procession started moving. Till that day not many knew that I had a wife because she had never attended any meeting or public function with me. Even that day she would have gone straight to our residence if Sarojini Naidu had not insisted on her remaining in the carriage.

The procession seemed interminable. The city had put on a festive appearance. Shops had been decorated and many arches had been erected. Congress flags and buntings were everywhere. Most of the arches were unique; they were decorated with the commodity for which the locality in which they were erected was well known. In the Cotton Market area, for example, cotton bales were used to make a huge arch. I was told the value of the bales used was over a lakh of rupees. Throughout the route we were welcomed with flowers and devotional music. Our carriage was full of presents. Never before, it was said, had Bombay accorded such a reception to anyone. In 1918, Hasan Imam was also given a rousing reception when he came to preside over the special session of the Congress held in Bombay, but the present reception was far bigger, in keeping with the greater political awakening of the period. It took three hours for the procession to reach Congress Nagar. Then I was taken to my lodge. I felt awfully tired, but, fortunately, I did not fall ill.

The next day Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders arrived and the Subjects Committee began its session. Discussion in the Committee was rather heated, which in the light of the events was but natural. On the eve of the session, Gandhiji had issued a statement saying that he would like to retire from the Congress and serve it as best as he could from outside. He wanted also the Congress constitution to be amended so as to make the party more dynamic and more representative of the people. This statement caused a great sensation. Although Gandhiji gave an assurance that he would do his best for the organisation from outside and asserted that his withdrawal would only make the Congress stronger rather than weaker, the people were not satisfied. I had supported Gandhiji's decision in my address, but the A.-I.C.C. was not so convinced.

I said that Gandhiji's intention certainly could not be to weaken the Congress in any way and that we would be able to consult him and seek his guidance whenever we needed it but his withdrawal certainly meant one thing, that the responsibility for taking any decisions would henceforth be that of leaders other than Gandhiji. Ever since Gandhiji entered the political arena in India, other leaders had been completely eclipsed by his magnetic personality. The Congress could, of course, boast of many able, far-sighted leaders capable of looking at a problem from all angles. But when Gandhiji took over the helm, many were content to fall in line and nod to whatever he said and hardly thought it necessary to do their own thinking. Even so, it had to be admitted that no decision that was taken under Gandhiji's leadership was reached without the fullest consideration. The Mahatma's only aim was that on his retirement others would be prompted to think for themselves and the impression that whatever was done was done at his bidding would be removed.

It was because I was at one with him on these points that I lent my support to his decision, but others did not see matters in that light. Some were worried that Gandhiji's withdrawal would mean his exit from the Congress and that he would no longer be available for consultation. Others feared that his leaving the Congress might mean that it would cease to inspire confidence in the people to the extent that it had done hitherto and that therefore, it would grow weak. There was another section which thought Gandhiji had not taken kindly to the entry into the Congress of people of different views and that was why he was leaving it. They, therefore, felt that he must be persuaded to continue in the Congress. Gandhiji was pressed from all sides to drop the idea of retirement, but he stuck to his decision. He continued to stress the point that the Congress would come to no harm by his retirement and repeated his assurance that his advice would always be available to them whenever they needed it. He then emphasised the need for amending the party constitution. When ultimately it became clear that his mind was made up we turned to other points on the agenda.

The proposal to amend the Congress constitution was then debated, equally hotly. A sub-committee was set up to draft

the amendments. Gandhiji and the newly-formed Socialist Party had a great hand in the drafting. We then took up the proposed Constitution of India being drawn up by the British Government. The proposals incorporated the Communal Award of Ramsay Macdonald, against which Mahatma Gandhi had gone on fast. That had been altered by the consent of the parties involved as laid down in the Award itself. After a protracted discussion, mostly on the Award, the Working Committee decided that unjust though the Award was, it would neither accept it nor oppose it. This meant no endorsement of the Communal Award. It was criticised in strong terms, only the Working Committee did not want to oppose it and have an open quarrel with other parties. Besides, no special reference to the Award was called for as the Working Committee had rejected the entire constitutional plan, of which the Award was a part. A specific rejection of the Award might be construed as an acceptance of other parts of the Constitution not so specifically opposed.

Further, the Communal Award part of the Constitution was one that we could alter ourselves but we were not authorised to alter any other part of it. The Working Committee decided, therefore, to reject the entire Constitution. Pandit Malaviya and M. S. Aney vehemently opposed the Working Committee resolution on it and there were prolonged discussions on the subject. Gandhiji could not convince them nor could they convince him. The Congress, as a whole, however, accepted the Working Commitee's view and the resolution was taken to the open session.

I had grown very weak but I was able to conduct the proceedings. The Socialist Party took part in the discussions as a group. Among them were good satyagrahis and well-read men who always followed an independent line. They referred many questions of procedure to me for decision. I had never been a member of any legislative assembly nor were there any rules of procedure in the Congress regulations. When such issues were raised they were usually decided in consonance with British parliamentary practice and procedure. A number of procedural questions were raised and they had to be decided on the spot. I did as I thought proper, using mere common-sense. I was gratified to learn later

that my decisions were in keeping with the general rules.

I did not read out my presidential address in full because, in consultation with Gandhiji, we had decided to allow as much time as possible for discussion on all controversial matters. Further, on the basis of my own experience I knew that people did not like printed addresses, copies of which they had in their hands, to be read in full. At the Belgaum Congress, Gandhiji had distributed his presidential address even before the session and called for comments on it. I, therefore, read only part of my speech and called on the members to initiate a discussion on the Working Committee resolution.

Pandit Malaviya moved an amendment to the resolution on the Communal Award and made a long speech. Discussion continued for two days. When the time came for voting, Pandit Malaviya wanted to speak again. According to rules, he was not entitled to speak on his amendment for a second time, but he had expressed his desire to speak. I was in a quandary. I had great regard for him, but at the same time if I allowed him to speak others would claim the same privilege. I then decided not to grant him the permission and referred him to the relevant rule. I assured him that I would myself convey to the meeting whatever he wished to say again. When the vote was taken the amendment was rejected and the Working Committee resolution was adopted by a big majority. Some of those who were opposed to the resolution, however, got very angry and threatened to hurl shoes at the dais.

The Congress pandal was fitted with powerful loud-speakers and Gandhiji, who was not present at the session, could hear, sitting in his hut, the whole proceedings. He, therefore, asked me jokingly the next day how I could prevent a person like Pandit Malaviya from speaking. I told him how sorry I was for that but that my decision was as President of the Congress, not as Rajendra Prasad.

There was not much discussion on other resolutions. The one amending the Congress constitution was adopted unanimously at the open session, without any discussion, as it had already been discussed enough. It was an important resolution.

Till then the election of delegates to the Congress session used to be in proportion to the population of the province. The result was that, irrespective of whether the Congress was active or not, if a province had a large population, it could always be sure of representation in the A.-I.C.C. and the open session on the basis of its population. Membership of the Congress in a province and not its population was now made the basis of returning members to the A.-I.C.C. It was provided in the amended constitution that a province should return one representative for every 500 members on its rolls. Some time later this was changed and a provision was made that the number of delegates should also be in proportion to the population. It implied that if a province enrolled members so as to entitle it to send delegates in excess of the number justified by its population, the quota for each delegate would increase and *vice versa.*

Another question was how to secure representation for minority groups which had little chance of success in a straight election. The Socialist Party, which was a minority group, pleaded in favour of proportional representation by a single transferable vote. It was not possible to accept this proposal for the election of delegates, but we accepted it for purposes of election to the A.-I.C.C. Later, we detected several defects in the working of the amended constitution. Consequently, it had to be amended several times, although the fundamental basis remains the same. There has been much difference of opinion on the question of proportional representation and it has now come to be recognised that a limited electorate can also be a source of weakness in certain circumstances. According to the Congress constitution, eight members can elect a member of the A.-I.C.C. so that if one can win over eight members he can get elected. On the other hand, one who does not canvass for himself or who has no friends to canvass for him actively, does not get elected even if he is a worker of standing and experience. This system encourages the creation of small groups and under it the better class of men do not stand a chance of election which political manipulators have. The general opinion, therefore, is not much in favour of this system now. Nevertheless, the rule is still in vogue and forms part of the Congress constitution. In Bombay

its inadequacies had not yet come to notice and the general feeling was that there could possibly be only one reason for opposing the amendment — the desire to keep the Socialists out.

The Congress session concluded at midnight on the third day. I was happy that my health was maintained and I was able to do my duty. The delegates departed full of enthusiasm and expectancy. They were thinking of the forthcoming elections to the Central Assembly, in which, seeing the enthusiasm of the people, a Congress victory appeared to be a foregone conclusion.

As I reached my residence that night I had an attack of asthma. Fortunately, there was not much to do on the following day except to constitute my Working Committee. I had already thought of some names and now I added a few and issued the list to the press the next day. The most important thing was the choice of a suitable General Secretary. For this post I wanted a person who could devote his entire time to this office and whose views on important matters would correspond to mine. After a great deal of thought I decided to have Acharya Kripalani as Secretary.

I wanted to name a Bengali on the Working Committee but could not do so at the time. For this I laid myself open to criticism by my Bengali friends who became very angry with me for ignoring such an important province. But the reason for my stand was that there were two groups in the Bengal Congress, both of which wanted representation on the Committee. There was no room in the Committee for two members from Bengal. Further, if I did include two members there was the danger of the Working Committee becoming the venue for the factional disputes of Bengal.

I had decided in Bombay that Gandhiji should not be troubled with the day-to-day problems of the Congress and that he should be consulted only on matters of importance. I did not want him unnecessarily to attend every meeting of the Working Committee of the A.-I.C.C. Throughout my tenure as President of the Congress, I stuck to this policy. I used to visit Wardha to consult him but did not trouble him with the periodical Working Committee meetings.

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Central Assembly Elections

THE elections to the Central Assembly came off in November 1934. The Government was under the impression that during the long-drawn-out satyagraha the Congress had been suppressed beyond hope of survival. But the public response to the appeal of the Central Earthquake Relief Committee in Bihar and the Bombay session of the Congress had given some indication of the sustained popular support to the premier political organisation in the country. There was a large section of the people and among these were Government officials which was not sure if the Congress was still representative of the country as a whole. The ensuing elections would, therefore, decide, it was felt, the Congress claim to represent India. We, therefore, attached great importance to these elections.

In Madras, the Justice Party, which had been in office since 1920, had done everything possible to consolidate and strengthen itself. It had able men in its ranks. Primarily a party of non-Brahmins, it claimed to speak on behalf of all of them. By its rabid anti-Brahmin propaganda, it had created such a schism that, in the province, the Congress and the Brahmins had come to be thought of as synonymous terms. The Justice Party enjoyed the full backing of the Government because a large number of landlords and moneyed people as also a majority of the population belonged to the non-Brahmin group.

Polling was not going to be simultaneous in all the provinces. The result in one province would have its effect on the voting in the others and so the Government, because it considered Madras to be the safest province, decided to hold the elections there first. The Congress put up candidates in all the constituencies. Its rivals were mostly the minions of the Government or those belonging to other political groups, but the main contest was between the Congress and the Justice Party, which was, next to the Congress, the strongest party in the whole country.

Having fallen ill in Bombay, I was in bed right up to December, till after the elections were finished. I could not do much for the elections beyond visiting a few places in Bihar. But others, especially Sardar Patel, strained themselves to the utmost to canvass support for Congress candidates. The results of the Madras elections, which came out first, were most startling for the Government. The Congress candidates were not only returned from all the constituencies, but they polled an overwhelmingly large number of votes. Even in the constituencies considered by the Justice Party as its pocket boroughs, Congressmen beat Justicites by wide margins. The contest in some constituencies was particularly keen. The late S. Satyamurthi defeated the extremely able and well-known Justicite, A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, in one such constituency. The traders' constituency, considered the Justicites' pocket borough, had a rude surprise for them. S. Shanmugham Chetty, who had once been elected to the Central Assembly on the Congress ticket and who had severed his connections with the Congress during the satyagraha movement, a man of exceptional ability and a favourite of Lord Willingdon, now represented the Justice Party in that constituency. He was trounced by Venkatachalam Chetty, the Congress nominee.

The Madras results set the pace for other provinces. The whole country was swept by a pro-Congress atmosphere. The party won easy victories in all the provinces. In Bihar, in one constituency, the Congress happened to oppose a big business man, Seth Ramkrishna Dalmia. He had always been sympathetic to the Congress and had always helped it with money. He decided to stand in the elections and told me that the Congress candidate, Anugrah Narain Sinha, should be withdrawn. This was not possible as it was the Congress policy to put up a candidate in every constituency. He was not willing to submit to Congress discipline and become its candidate. He spent lavishly for his campaign only to suffer an ignominious defeat at the hands of his Congress rival.

There were some sad features of the elections to offset our triumphs. Pandit Malaviya, who had unsuccessfully opposed the official resolution on the British Government's constitutional proposals at the Bombay Congress, formed a group of

his own and set up candidates against the Congress nominees in almost all the provinces. Only against M. S. Aney did the Congress not set up a candidate and he was returned unopposed. Everywhere else there was a keen contest between the Congress and the Malaviya group. In Bihar, the Malaviya group lost everywhere while in Bengal, the Congress lost almost everywhere. The main reason was that the Communal Award was very unfavourable to Bengal Hindus, who constituted 44 per cent. of the population of the province. Being a minority, the Hindu community was entitled to weightage but, according to the Award, it was given only 39 per cent., that is, less even than their numerical strength. And because by the Poona Pact between Gandhiji and the Harijan leaders a large chunk of the Hindu seats had to be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Caste Hindus were left with a very limited number of seats. The caste Hindus were, therefore, very much dissatisfied and were the most trenchant critics of the Communal Award.

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Talks with Jinnah

ALTHOUGH the Congress had come out victorious in the elections, it was considered essential to repair the damage to the organisation during its four-year banishment and revitalise it. As a first step, it seemed necessary that I should undertake an all-India tour. The provincial Congress committees also pressed me to do so. As it was not possible for me to move about during the winter months, I decided to begin the tour immediately after the cold season.

The Central Assembly met in Delhi in January. A meeting of the Working Committee was convened at the time. Gandhiji also attended it. The people of Delhi accorded me a very warm welcome reminiscent of the Bombay reception. The same popular enthusiasm was visible among the people and I was taken out in a procession through the streets of Delhi. I was not quite well and these formalities were too much for my weak health, but somehow I went through them.

Then I met Gandhiji. He told me that he was still attached to the Congress and should an occasion arise he would demonstrate his love for it. He was happy that the people had not forgotten the Congress and had displayed their trust by voting for it in the elections. The welcome I had received in Bombay and Delhi was nothing peculiar to these places. He was sure that I would be shown the same warmth and affection wherever I went. He liked my idea of going round and visiting all the provinces. I do not like big processions and welcomes but I had to submit to them as they were tributes to the office of the President. When I thought of the earlier days when Congress workers found it hard to find hosts to put them up in some places, I was struck by the contrast that the new enthusiasm of the people presented. I began to chalk out an itinerary. I decided to take Chakradhar Saran, a Congress worker from Muzaffarpur, with me.

But before I could start on my tour, an important problem claimed prior attention. The Communal Award, while it had gratified the Muslims, had equally displeased the Hindus.

Everyone felt that a Hindu-Muslim compromise was desirable. Dr. Ansari, who had already started negotiations with Mohammedali Jinnah, placed this proposal before the Working Committee, and it agreed to explore all avenues of compromise. Jinnah arrived in Delhi. One day, the members of the Working Committee met him at Dr. Ansari's house. But the negotiations were too delicate to be conducted collectively by the Committee and, at Jinnah's instance, it was decided that I should have talks with him in the first instance and, if some sort of agreement was reached, the Working Committees of the Congress and the Muslim League could be called to discuss the proposals and ratify them. The manner in which the talks began on the first day did not raise much hope in me but I did not despair and devoted myself wholeheartedly to the task. I was not sure of my ability to conduct such negotiations, but I was encouraged as Dr. Ansari and Sardar Patel were always available for consultation and Gandhiji's blessings were there.

After lasting several weeks, the talks came to an infructuous end. Jinnah and I had heart-to-heart talks and, as far as I could see, we liked each other. At the end of every meeting I used to jot down notes and keep Gandhiji and other leaders, Sardar Patel, Dr. Ansari, Acharya Kripalani and Sarojini Naidu, informed of the progress. I felt very sorry for the failure because I thought the conditions on which I had agreed to compromise and which I had persuaded Jinnah to accept would have been in the best interests of the country. I felt particularly sad because the ground on which the talks failed was not of any special significance. I thought that it was as silly to have insisted upon including those conditions as to have rejected the compromise because of them.

I made it plain to Jinnah at the outset that I was speaking only on behalf of the Congress and that I had no mandate to speak on behalf of other organisations. Whatever I agreed to, I undertook to get ratified by the Congress and I expected him similarly to secure the approval of the Muslim League. Jinnah knew our attitude towards the Communal Award, on account of which we got into conflict with a respected leader like Pandit Malaviya. He had also seen the success which had attended the Congress in the elections everywhere, except in

Bengal. I, therefore, thought that he was in the right mood for compromise. I told him plainly that there was no likelihood of a compromise unless he gave up his demand for separate electorates as we considered it to be most harmful to the growth of nationalism. In fact, I told him that the talks could be begun only on condition that he agreed to do away with separate electorates. He replied that the Muslims who had been used to these facilities for some time could not be expected to surrender them unless something substantial was offered them in return.

I agreed that the Muslims should get the same number of seats as the Communal Award gave them. Our talks began with this agreement as the basis. Jinnah then put forth another demand that, in constituencies where the number of Muslim voters was less than their population warranted, the franchise should be lowered for them so as to increase the number of voters in proportion to the Muslim population. The Muslims, he said, were poor and backward and, where the capacity to pay taxes was the basis of enfranchisement, many Muslims would be deprived of the right to vote. I studied the figures in reference to the Punjab carefully. I found that in several constituencies the number of Muslim voters fell short of their population ratio, but the difference was just two per cent, or even less. I regarded Jinnah's demand essentially fair in view of our stand on joint electorates and adult franchise. I had, therefore, no difficulty in accepting it. But when I mentioned it to the Bengal Hindu leaders and the Sikhs, there was serious opposition. Though the Central Assembly members from Bengal were inclined to agree, Bengal Hindus were vehement in their opposition.

When I broached the matter with Pandit Malaviya, he said he would be agreeable if the Sikhs and the Bengal Hindus endorsed it. I tried my best to collect statistics about Bengal but I was unable to get a clear picture from the records available. I could not, therefore, discuss it with the Bengal Hindus without the necessary data. I then requested Jinnah not to insist on this demand as it was not of much consequence. The fractional difference in the electorate was so insignificant that it was unlikely to have any appreciable effect on the election results. Jinnah would not agree and I accepted his

demand on behalf of the Congress. But he insisted on its endorsement by Pandit Malaviya also because, he said, if Malaviya started an agitation against the Communal Award, the agreement by the Congress would be nullified.

Just at that time an anti-Communal Award Conference was held in Delhi, and it denounced the Award. I tried my best to get Pandit Malaviya to agree with me but he stipulated that the representation given to the Muslims at the Centre and in Bengal should be reduced. On the other hand, Jinnah was determined not to sign any agreement unless Malaviya was also a signatory. While he was willing to guarantee acceptance of the agreement by all Muslims he wanted a similar guarantee not only from me but also from Pandit Malaviya, representing the Hindus. The talks, therefore, broke down, primarily because, although Jinnah had been negotiating with me as the President of the Congress, he insisted that the Hindu Mahasabha should also be a party to the agreement. His attitude had undergone a change. He wants the Muslim League to be accepted as the only representative of the Indian Muslims while he classifies the Congress as a representative of the Hindus. The Congress is not, and has never been, a purely Hindu organisation. It has always been a national organisation whose doors are open to people of all classes, creeds and religions. I felt sorry that the compromise talks failed because I was convinced that with this failure the situation would steadily deteriorate. This conviction was, unfortunately, borne out by later developments.

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A Tour of the Provinces

AFTER the Delhi talks began my tour of the Punjab in March. I was sorry to see the sharp differences among the Congressmen in the province and I was myself a victim of the rift. An account of my visits to Jullundur and Lahore would show what a guest in a house divided against itself has to suffer. Jullundur was my first halt. Kripalani accompanied me on the tour. There are two railway stations for Jullundur — Cantonment and City. I did not know at which of the stations I was to get down. I thought of alighting at the station where the local Congressmen came to receive us. The train arrived at the first station about four in the morning. Some people met us there and asked us to get down. We were taken to the waiting room for a little rest and refreshments. I thought they meant to take me to the city after daybreak but then I saw that our would-be host, Raizada Hans Raj, was not among them. Perhaps he was late, I thought, and waited a while.

A little while later, Raizada came in. He said he had been waiting for us at the next station and, when we did not arrive, rushed in a car to the first station. I learnt that the people who had received us belonged to a rival group and did not want us to stay with Raizada Hans Raj and had their own plans for lodging us. Both the groups then began to dispute on the question. Kripalani and I were very embarrassed when we saw the altercation over our stay being conducted in our very presence. Ultimately, it was decided that we should lunch with the Raizada and have our breakfast at the house of a gentleman of the rival group. I knew the Raizada very well and it was to him that I had sent a telegram about my arrival but when I saw the provincial factions I did not want to enter into any dispute and accepted whatever arrangement was made for me. After finishing our breakfast we left for the freer atmosphere of Adampur, a big khadi centre. Then we went to the Raizada's house for lunch and in the evening left for Lahore.

A similar experience awaited us in Lahore also. Dr. Satyapal, President of the Provincial Congress Committee, was in jail and the tour arrangements had to be made by others. I was met at the station by a group of people who told me that they had arranged for our stay in the Servants of the People Society's Home. I had many friends among the members of the Society. But a messenger came from Shrimati Satyapal with a letter inviting me to stay at her residence. I was in a quandary as the two groups began to argue among themselves. Kripalani lost his temper and rated both the factions for not deciding among themselves and embarrassing the guests. The Servants of the People Society had already arranged a big dinner in our honour. It was decided, therefore, that I should stay at Dr. Satyapal's residence but go to Lajpat Rai Bhavan (Servants of the People Society's Home) in the evening for dinner.

Then I was taken in a huge procession from the station. We had hardly gone a few furlongs when it started raining heavily. I got drenched but the procession moved on and terminated at Dr. Satyapal's residence. In fact, the drenching could have been avoided had the dispute between the rival groups not resulted in the alteration of the route of the procession which had been fixed previously. I attended the dinner in the evening but in the night developed temperature and asthma. My illness took a serious turn the next day and I was confined to bed.

Even during my illness the wrangles of the groups continued. My Punjabi hosts could not decide which doctor or vaid should attend on me. A doctor called by one group was not liked by the other who wanted to call a doctor in whom they had trust. From allopathy, we changed to homoeopathy. As the time I had allotted for my Punjab tour was all spent in bed in Lahore, I cancelled my tour programme and left for Bihar.

But from April to the end of June I was able to follow the programme I had drawn up. The A.-I.C.C. or the Congress had not met in the Central Provinces and so I decided to convene a meeting of the A.-I.C.C. there. It was held in Jabalpur in April. There was nothing much to discuss but I thought periodical meetings would facilitate discussions of common

ıs and exchange of views among Congressmen. After
:ting I went to Berar where a provincial political
ıce was being held under the presidentship of Pandit
ant. After attending the conference, I started on a tour
district. I saw signs of enthusiasm all round. My
ɔllowed a pattern of unending series of receptions,
ons and mammoth public meetings. It was the first
ı for me to tour areas outside Bihar extensively and
:d it. Besides seeing innumerable places, I had an
nity of meeting the people and leaders all over the
and strengthening the Congress organisation.

my tour of Berar I set out on an intensive tour of
ık and Maharashtra. I used to get up every day at
ınd drive on to the next halting place. After addressing
at several places, I would stop for my lunch at some
nd, after a short rest, set out again and keep moving
ıce to place till late in the night. Most of the travelling
ıe by road. During the tour which lasted till June I
Bihar only once to perform my brother's *shradha*
ıy.

isited villages and towns, big and small. Motoring
the forests and along the sea coast of Karnatak,
ıed Mysore State from where we returned *via* Sholapur,
Poona, Belgaum, Malvan, Ratnagiri, Ahmednagar
er places, in all of which I addressed largely-attended
s. I was enchanted by the scenery and natural beauty
regions, the high mountains, the dense forests and
green plains of the Deccan. The multiplicity of
es and the colourful costumes of the people parti-
made an impression on me. At the back of all this
iety one could not miss the underlying unity of India.
end of the Deccan plateau are the parched plains of
ınd Sholapur and at the other, the comforting, hilly
Mysore and Coorg. In Mercara, an open space on the
a hill provided us with an excellent location for a
neeting. From there one could see down below, as
e eye could reach, the beautiful ranges of green forest.
ire stretch of land is covered with vegetation. The
s very dense and is infested with elephants and

The people of Maharashtra are fond of flowers. They used to bring basket-loads of garlands to welcome me. It is customary in Maharashtra for the various institutions to join in welcoming a distinguished guest and representatives of each of them to garland him separately. In places where flowers were not available locally, they imported them. Seeing that the people spent a lot of money on flowers, I issued an appeal that I would be glad to be presented with garlands of hand-spun yarn instead of flowers. Shankarrao Deo liked the idea and tried to popularise it. Consequently during the rest of the tour of the area, I got so much of hand-spun yarn that I was able to make from it enough khadi to meet my requirements for several years even after distributing liberally to friends.

The Maharashtra Congress Committee had decided that at every public meeting I should be presented with a purse. I received cash presents wherever I went. Sometimes my car would be stopped by people on the roadside to present me with a purse. I thus collected about twenty-two thousand rupees. Kripalani kept a small portion of this sum for the A.-I.C.C. and handed the rest (more than three-fourths) to the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee to be spent in the province. In this tour I was impressed by the efficiency of the Maharashtra Congress workers. The itinerary drawn up by them was so perfect and their sense of timing was so good that I was able to visit every one of the places scheduled in the programme in time. Shankerrao Deo maintained strict punctuality. Nowhere was I rushed or delayed and I was given sufficient time for rest. This was in sad contrast to the arrangements in other provinces. In my own province, when Jawaharlal Nehru visited Bankipur and Patna in 1937, meetings were held at midnight and at two in the morning in the coldest month of January, thanks to the organisers who did not have the foresight to take all factors into consideration. That the vast gathering waited patiently in bitter cold, since evening, is a tribute to the Congress. That they should have had to wait is a commentary on our organisational ability.

The discipline of the Maharashtrians was exemplary. Nowhere was there an unscheduled stoppage by people and nowhere did people rush and mob me. The welcome they

gave me in Sholapur would provide a vivid example. The authorities, at the last moment, wanting to prevent the people from taking part in the reception arranged for me, banned processions. The organisers decided to obey the Government orders but at the same time wanted the reception to be as effective as a procession. They asked the people to stand quietly in front of their houses, or shops or on rooftops. Then I was driven along the route which the procession was to have followed according to original arrangements. The people obeyed the organisers implicitly. As my car drove along the route, followed by one or two cars, I saw rows of people on my right and my left, standing still, not making a sound. There was no stampede anywhere. Everyone was able to see me and I saw the great preparations they had made to welcome me. The whole town was gaily decorated. At a few places my car was stopped and the people were allowed to garland me. In this way I was spared the dust and din of a procession and the people of a possible stampede. Though the car moved slowly, my drive round the city took less time than a procession would have taken. I congratulated the organisers of the reception for turning a likely disappointment into a triumph and making the show even more effective than a procession. It was a defeat for the authorities, and it was all organised in a matter of a few hours. I wonder if we cannot do the same thing in other places also even when processions are not banned. I am sure it can be done. As it is, much time and energy is spent in controlling the crowd. In the rush and the confusion so many feel like taking charge, the chief guest is often surrounded and hidden from public view and there is more rush to have a glimpse of him. In this way, the depth of moving men goes on increasing and the crowd swelling. There is naturally a lot of dust and noise. The worst victim of the din and the dust is the distinguished visitor and if he happens to be asthmatic like myself, naturally, he has to pay for it.

While on this tour, news came of the terrible earthquake in Quetta. It was not until a few days after the tremors that we got some details of the catastrophe. The earthquake appeared to be as devastating as the Bihar earthquake. A relief committee was set up under my chairmanship and it

set about collecting funds. The Quetta tremors were not so widespread as in Bihar, but the destruction caused in Quetta town and its environs was terrific. Quetta was a military station and the army was able to tackle relief work immediately. But no public organisation was allowed to function there. The Government imposed precensorship of news and a few papers which dared to contravene the regulations were dealt with severely. Quetta was thus sealed from the outside world, official press notes being the only source of information. Newspapers launched a campaign of protest but the Government paid no heed. People coming from Quetta complained bitterly about conditions there but no one could publish their complaints nor could they be investigated. The Government restrictions created an impression that the complaints had some basis, but we just could not do anything.

A majority of the population of Quetta consisted of Punjabis and Sindhis. A large body of survivors from among them returned to their respective provinces. The reports of the magnitude of the disaster came from these people. Public organisations did their best to provide shelter for these unfortunate people, many of whom had lost their bread-earners, in relief camps and arranged for their rehabilitation. I was anxious to go to Quetta and put the experience I had gained in Bihar to some use for the relief of people there, but the Government refused to give me permission.

I went to Karachi instead and visited all the Sind towns to which refugees from Quetta had returned. I met thousands of them and heard their tales of woe. I wrote a letter to the Government detailing the plight of the people and their complaints and pressed for permission to visit Quetta. My long letter fetched a two-line reply from Sir Maurice Hallet, Home Member of the Government of India, refusing the permission asked for as he did not consider the complaints worth investigating. I then turned to the relief of the people who had come from Quetta. I set up relief committees in the Sind and Punjab towns where the refugees had flocked and distributed among them the few lakhs of rupees which the Quetta Relief Committee had collected. The relief work in Sind was entrusted to Jairamdas Daulatram and in the Punjab to Dr. Gopichand Bhargava.

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Awakening in Princely States

THE Congress had all along adopted a policy of non-interference in the affairs of the Princely States of India. Whatever the original reasons for such a policy, in later years, especially after the satyagraha movement, there was an awakening in the States, and, a growing demand for a greater interest on the part of the Congress in the States began to be voiced by the people in those areas. Criticisms were given expression to in the party itself and a change in the traditional policy was widely demanded.

The Princely States, big and small, numbered nearly six hundred. Some of them were no bigger than the municipal parks of the big cities of India, while others were of considerable size, thousands of square miles in area, with populations running into millions. Most of the rulers were autocratic with no democratic institutions at all in their territories. The people had absolutely no hand in the administration. The bigger states enjoyed a measure of autonomy in internal matters. The smaller States were no better than zamindaris or estates, in which the management was mostly in the hands of the nominees of the British Government. These Englishmen had an effective say in the administration, particularly in the matter of appointments of Dewans or Ministers. The British Government had thus an indirect control over the affairs of these States.

In no Indian State was it possible for the ruler to do anything of significance without the consent of the British Government. No Prince who incurred the displeasure of the British Government for one reason or other was ever safe and he had to face the threat of deposition. The right to punish a ruler for maladministration or misdeeds of any kind was the prerogative of the British Crown. The Princes, who displayed a pathetic fondness for old treaties and their historic obligations to the British Crown, claimed that they had treaty rights with the Crown. But actually, action was taken against them whenever they happened to cross the path of the British

Government. Such of the Princes as were clever enough to keep on the right side of the British Residents were comparatively safe and could treat their people in any manner they liked with impunity.

Fifty years of agitation in what was known as British India resulted in the conferment, in course of time, of a measure of responsible government on the people of India; the Princely States continued without such institutions. The Princely territories and British India are so inter-mixed that there would appear to be no differences between them. There are no differences between the people living in British India and the Indian States. Both have the same outlook, the same religions, customs and traditions. It seemed very odd indeed that while the same people living on one side of a boundary line enjoyed some sort of civic rights, those on the other side had no civic rights of any kind and were subjected to completely autocratic rule. Every measure of democratisation granted to British India, therefore, could not but affect the people living in the neighbouring States. The people of those areas began organising themselves to agitate for better amenities and democratic administration. They also began to join in the satyagraha conducted in British India. With the passage of time, they grew critical of the Congress attitude to their problems and aspirations.

When Congress provincial committees were reorganised on a linguistic basis at the Nàgpur session in 1920, the party constitution was changed, allowing the people of the States to join the political organisations of the neighbouring British Indian provinces. The people of Kathiawad, therefore, began to take part in the Congress activities of their Gujerati-speaking brethren on the other side of the border in British Gujerat. For purposes of election of delegates and members of the A.-I.C.C., Kathiawad and Gujerat came to be looked upon as one territory. Similarly, Rajputana and Rajasthan were considered one territory.

The Congress did not want to set up its branches directly in the Indian States for fear of getting involved in clashes with the Princes and their administrations. But a wave of consciousness swept the States and the people began demanding that the Congress interest itself in their affairs also. The

Congress thought that if it could gain its point with the British Government, it was bound to be able to tackle the Princes also successfully because, after all, they derived their strength from the British. The Princely States were, however, in a state of ferment. There were many reasons for this.

Representatives of the Princes participated in the Round Table Conference in London. The Princes had agreed to bring their States within the framework of the new Constitution proposed to be drawn up for India provided their rights and privileges were duly protected. In the proposed Federal Assembly, therefore, one-third of the seats were reserved for States' representatives. But while British Indian representatives would be elected by the people, the States' representatives would be nominated by the Princes. The States' people disliked the arrangement and so did we since we felt that the Federal Assembly would be representative only in name, one-third of the members being nominated by the British Government through the Residents. This provided another talking point for the critics of the Congress policy of non-interference.

Half-hearted reforms were introduced in some States because of the atmosphere of tension prevailing in the country. So-called legislative assemblies were established, but none of them had the rights enjoyed by their British Indian counterparts under the 1920 Constitution. Some States like Mysore, Travancore and Baroda, however, had quite progressive administrations and, in fact, in some respects, like education, they were far ahead of British India. The people in the other States were not satisfied with the reforms haltingly introduced in their areas. The Gujerati and Marwari businessmen who had settled in Bombay, Calcutta and other big cities and who took part in the satyagraha movement, wanted the independence movement to spread to the States also. Gradually, the group in the Congress which wanted a change in the party's policy of non-interference in States grew in strength. At the time of the Bombay Congress the demand was voiced that the party should make no discrimination between the people of the British Indian provinces and the princely States.

Mahatma Gandhi himself was born in a Kathiawad state. The territories of Kathiawad and the neighbouring British

Indian province of Gujerat were so intermingled that the whole area resembled a jig-saw puzzle. That was why Gandhiji and Sardar Patel had good contacts with the people there. Gandhiji thought that if the Congress started interfering in the internal affairs of the States, their people would lose the initiative to agitate for themselves and stand on their own feet. He wanted that the agitation for democratic institutions should sprout from the soil itself and not be transplanted from outside. With all his sympathy for the States' peoples' aspirations, he was not in favour of the Congress extending its activities to the States. Short of taking direct part in any agitation, the party was willing to extend its sympathy and any assistance that the people might require.

Gandhiji made this announcement in the course of a statement. As President, I also issued a similar statement But these statements did not cut any ice with the States' people who were dissatisfied. The Working Committee's resolution which was on the lines of my statement only increased the discontent. The matter was taken up for discussion by the A.-I.C.C. which met in Madras towards the latter part of 1935 but it endorsed the Working Committee's resolution. The controversy, therefore, continued unabated. But there was one good result, a result envisaged by Gandhiji. The States' people began to act themselves. Political organisations, known as Praja Mandals, sprouted in most of the States. The Congress did not hesitate to help them whenever necessary.

After the Madras A.-I.C.C. meeting, I started on my tour of South India. My health was not quite up to the mark throughout the year but I was somehow able to carry on my duties and even strenuous tours. I followed my usual programme of travelling by road the whole day, addressing meetings on the way and resting at night at some place. During this tour the question of language came to the fore. In Madhya Pradesh (Central Provinces) and Maharashtra, I spoke in Hindi. But in Tamil Nad, I had to speak in English which was translated in the regional language, sentence by sentence.

The Hindi Prachar Sabha had made much headway in South India. In spite of this, however, it was impossible for me to speak in Hindi because many among the audience did not understand it. At many meetings, I was told that 90 per

cent. of the people did not understand either Hindi or English. Even in towns, while the percentage of people knowing English was greater than in villages, those who could follow Hindi were not very numerous. Further, Hindi translators were not as easily available as those of English. I was out of practice in making speeches in English but I got used to it soon. Throughout Tamil Nad and Kerala I spoke in English.

The Hindu, the well-edited English daily of Madras with a big circulation, is one of the best established newspapers in India. While in Madras I had an experience of the quickness and efficiency of their reporting events. The day I reached the city in the afternoon, the people gave me a reception near the railway station. I spoke a few words in reply to their address. From there I was taken in a procession through the various parts of the city to Mylapore, where I was to stay. When my carriage passed in front of *The Hindu* office, a copy of the day's paper (*The Hindu* was an evening daily then) was presented to me. Glancing over the pages, I saw the issue contained a complete report of my arrival, the public reception, the procession with a few pictures and a verbatim record of my speech. Wherever I went in Madras Province I found a representative of *The Hindu* to report my speech. No staff correspondent travelled with me as the newspaper had representatives in all places. Nowhere else have my speeches been reported so well as during my tour of Tamil Nad and Kerala.

During my tour, when I hardly left out a town or an important village unvisited, I had a taste of the Brahmin-non-Brahmin differences which reminded me of the Hindu-Muslim question in the north and the Bengali-Bihari problem in Bengal and Bihar. The non-Brahmin Justice Party had been defeated in the Central Assembly elections but the contest left a trail of bitterness. I was put critical questions at places by people who regarded the Congress as a Brahmin organisation. I told them that the doors of the Congress were open to all and that there were several non-Brahmins in the Working Committee, for example, Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Acharya Kripalani and me. Perhaps my explanation made some impression on my questioners but I was pained to see the misgivings engendered in the public mind by the vicious propaganda of some individuals.

Still more interesting was the "welcome" given b
party of non-Brahmins known as the Self-Respectin
At some places, I was confronted with black flags and
"Go back". But the party of demonstrators was
that we took it all as a mere joke. On one occasi
I heard the shouts of "Go back" at a meeting, I as
many persons there really wanted me to go back.
asked such people to raise their hands hardly a scor
My question and the response raised roars of laugh
even the demonstrators could not help laughing with
The meeting went on thereafter without interruptio

Once, when I was addressing a big gathering
some persons caused a disturbance and kept shouti
one corner. I did not hear anything but the audi
disgusted and made no secret of it. The police rou
the demonstrators and shut them up in a house ne
the meeting was over. I came to know of the incid
later. I found generally that the black flag demo
stopped shouting once the meeting started and sa
quietly to listen to the speech and after the meeting
resumed their slogan-shouting.

I visited Tiruvannamalai but as my programme v
heavy I could only just call on the great saint
Maharishi. A desire to have his *darshan* and spend so
at his ashram grew in me. It was not till long afterw
I got the opportunity. My friend, Shanker Lal Bank
used to visit the ashram often, advised me to go to Tir
malai as it would be beneficial to my health. He s
a short stay there had helped him in his heart conc
went with Jamnalal Bajaj later and stayed for seve
in Tiruvannamalai and visited the ashram almost da

I also visited Chidambaram, the seat of Annamalai
sity and famous for its Nataraj temple. The Univer
founded through the munificence of Raja Annamalai C
Srinivasa Sastri, who was the Vice-Chancellor th
asked me to stay with him for two days and so I f
programme to enable me to do so. Although I had
Sastri for a fairly long time, this was the first time
into close contact with him and my regard for him in

During my tour of Kerala, I visited Cochin and I

old tanks of Tatapuram. I visited Cape Comorin, the southernmost tip of India, where the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea meet. I spent some time there. It is a glorious sight to watch from there the sun rising from the depths in the morning and dipping its disk in the waters in the evening. India is often depicted as a woman, Bharat Mata, with Cape Comorin as her feet. I went round to see the rocks jutting out into the sea. I was told that Swami Vivekananda visited the rocks once and lay prostrate there in obeisance at the feet of Bharat Mata. When I stood there looking out to the boundless expanse of water I was overcome by the feeling that Nature meant that spot to be the end of the earth. One could not but be impressed by the fact that there was one continuous stretch of land from the North Pole right up to Cape Comorin where it ended and from there up to the South Pole there was an uninterrupted expanse of water.

From the Cape right up to Puri, I went by car along the east coast. In Andhra, as in Tamil Nad and Kerala, I received a great welcome. My friend there, Satyanarain, of the Hindi Prachar Sabha, accompanied me throughout the tour. He speaks Hindi like a northerner and with him by my side I was able to address meetings in Hindi in Andhra and he translated them into Telugu. There are more Hindi pracharaks in Andhra than in Tamil Nad. At some places, in fact, people requested me to speak in Hindi and they did not want the speech translated. It was during this tour that I realised the importance and the significance of propagation of Hindi in our nation-building programme.

I reached Visakhapatnam in the last lap of my Andhra tour. There I took the train for Raipur where I had to attend a function. From Raipur I left straight for Wardha. Except for Hyderabad State, as Congress President, I had by then toured the whole of the country south of the Vindhyas.

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Lucknow Congress

In December 1935, the Indian National Congress was to complete fifty years of its existence and we decided to celebrate the Golden Jubilee on a grand scale throughout the country. The principal function was to be held on the same site in Bombay where the first session of the Congress was held in 1885. The Bombay Provincial Congress Committee made all the arrangements. When I reached Bombay I learnt that Dinshaw Wacha, the only surviving person who had participated in the first session of the Congress and the oldest Congress President, was seriously ill. I considered it my duty to see him and seek his blessings for our Jubilee celebrations. When I saw him, however, he was in a state of coma and I could not talk to him. For some years differences had developed between him and the Congress, but no one could lose sight of the valuable services rendered by him to the organisation.

We decided to bring out a history of the Congress on the occasion of the Jubilee and we asked Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who had been writing an English version for some time, to complete it and get it published on behalf of the Congress. He completed it and at Wardha I revised it with him and wrote a preface for it. Translations were made in Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and other languages. On the day of the inauguration of the Golden Jubilee celebrations, most of the language editions, which were brought out by private publishers or the provincial Congress committees, and the English edition, brought out by the A.-I.C.C., were in our hands. There was a brisk sale and the Hindi and Marathi editions were exhausted in a few days and we had to arrange for a second edition. The English version too went through a second edition. Many other books about the Congress also appeared at that time. Compilations of the resolutions of the Congress in the past fifty years and G. A. Natesan's collection of the Congress Presidential speeches were some of them.

The Jubilee celebrations were held in the midst of great pomp and enthusiasm in Bombay and most of the towns in

the country. Public meetings were held everywhere and a special statement issued by the Congress Working Committee was read out and speeches on the history of the organisation were made. At night there were illuminations reminiscent of Divali. The celebrations were perhaps unprecedented in our history.

At the time of the Bombay session of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru was in jail, but soon after he was released to enable him to go to Europe, where in Switzerland, Kamla Nehru, who had been suffering from a prolonged illness, was in a serious condition. Hardly had Nehru reached Switzerland, when Kamla Devi passed away and Jawaharlal returned to India with his wife's ashes. I went to Allahabad aerodrome to receive him. There were moving scenes at the airport for, apart from being a personal loss to Jawaharlal, Kamla Devi's demise was a loss to the country also as she was a devoted Congress worker. Her ashes were immersed in the Ganga in all solemnity.

Preparations began for the next session of the Congress which was to be held in Lucknow. Jawaharlal was elected to preside over the session. A minor difficulty arose at the time of the election as there was a convention not to elect anyone as President who belonged to the province in which the Congress session was to be held. The next session was to be held in the U.P. and Jawaharlal was not only of that province but its principal Congress worker. But Gandhiji intervened to say that the Congress constitution did not forbid such an election, after which we found no difficulty in naming Nehru President.

A meeting of the Working Committee was called in Delhi, which was attended by Gandhiji. As the President-elect had been out of touch with the organisation for some time an opportunity was afforded to him to meet the members of the Working Committee and to exchange views with them on matters likely to come up before the Congress session. Jawaharlal, it was known, had sympathy for socialism. After his visit to Europe his views became more firm and pronounced. The Socialist Party had already come into existence in India and Nehru, though not a formal member, had views which often tallied with those of that party. Most of us had as little understanding of socialism as faith in it. At the meeting I

found that he and I had differences of opinion on some matters. The differences were not so much on the Congress programme or procedure as in our attitudes. Even if both of us agreed on a given matter, we usually had two different ways of tackling it.

A few days before the Lucknow session, the Working Committee met at Allahabad. We found that generally it took a fairly long time to draft the resolutions for the Congress session. In the beginning, there was a tendency to waste time over minor details but later when the time for the meeting of the Subjects Committee arrived we would hurry through. Consequently, all the resolutions would not be drafted in time for printed copies to be placed before the members at the Subjects Committee meeting. So, at the Allahabad meeting, the Working Committee discussed the agenda for the Lucknow session and prepared a number of resolutions with only a few left over for discussion and drafting at the time of the session.

The Bombay Congress had already rejected the British Government's reform proposals. In the party itself, there were two views current on the subject. One section felt that the Congress should accept office while the other was against this. The most vocal of the opponents were the Socialists. Although the Congress had rejected the reforms as such, it had taken no decision on how exactly the rejection was to be expressed. After all, the reforms were not going to be abrogated or withdrawn just because the Congress had rejected them. Therefore, the question arose whether or not the Congress should take part in the elections to be held according to the new Constitution and whether or not it should boycott them completely as it did in 1920. On the other hand, supposing it took part in the elections, and secured a majority in a province, should it form a ministry or should it create a deadlock and make the working of the Constitution impossible? It was not thought possible or desirable to decide the question before the actual elections. It was thought that we should wait and see whether Congressmen were returned in a majority anywhere. When, therefore, during my tour of South India, questions were put to me I explained the resolution of the Bombay Congress. People interpreted my reply in different

ways but if as Congress President I had expressed my views on the question of office acceptance the controversy inside the Congress would have deepened and attention focussed on the disagreements.

Another question arose on which there was no fundamental difference of opinion. An atmosphere of war was fast developing in Europe. Italy had invaded Ethiopia. England did not approve of Italy's action but avoided a direct clash with Italy on the issue. All that the League of Nations did was to express lip sympathy for Ethiopia. A policy of non-intervention, inspired by England and France, was adopted by the Powers and later the League of Nations applied economic sanctions against the invading nation but that had no effect on the aggressor. Our Socialist colleagues wanted the Congress to adopt a resolution sympathising with Ethiopia and refusing India's help to Britain in any future war because of her attitude to the victim of aggression. There could be no difference of opinion as far as extending sympathy to an oppressed country was concerned and although nothing was farther from my mind than that we should help Britain in case of war, I thought it premature for the Congress to express an opinion on international issues. I was, therefore, against going beyond an expression of sympathy for Ethiopia.

Jawaharlal, who, we conceded, was better informed than we were in international affairs and whose views we valued, also was not one with us on the issue. He was also opposed to office acceptance by the Congress. The Working Committee, however, was still undecided and did not want to commit itself until the elections were over. Nehru came out openly with his views but he was fair enough to say they were only his personal views.

It is difficult to say today on what specific issues there was difference of opinion between the two groups in the Congress but there were differences on many issues nevertheless and the majority in the Working Committee consisted of men of our way of thinking. But the differences did not relate to fundamentals and there was no question of the two sections parting company as happened at the time of the Gaya Congress when the Swarajya Party and the No-Changers separated. In fact, there were no two clear-cut groups in the Congress.

As a matter of fact none thought or acted in terms of a group and the differences had not crystallised to an extent as to lead anyone to think of the parting of ways. There were, really, only two ways of thinking and, perhaps, they continue to this day. So far as the real programme of the Congress was concerned there were no fundamental differences. We, the older generation, had great admiration for Jawaharlal's sincerity, integrity, capability, profound thinking and sacrifices in the country's cause. To break away from him was unthinkable. Likewise, he knew that we perhaps commanded greater influence with provincial workers and shared our keenness to pull together. Perhaps, both we and Jawaharlal's supporters thought that each was complementary to the other and that, however strong the differences might be, any split in the Congress would not be approved by the people.

After the Lucknow Congress session, Nehru had some difficulty in constituting his Working Committee. He wanted to infuse new blood. We were not opposed to this but, should we also continue in the Committee, we felt that it should be so formed as to ensure an effective voice for us. Gandhiji advised Nehru to include in the Committee such of those Socialists as he liked; in fact, he suggested a few names. We also agreed and the new Working Committee was formed of men of two different ways of thinking. The work of the Committee, however, was not impeded, though the Socialists' ways gave us some anxiety. They opposed, directly or indirectly, some of the Congress policies laid down by Gandhiji since 1920 and we felt that they were out to undo all that the Mahatma had done — all that formed the basis of Congress work, and all that had taken the country forward so far. But as far as I know Nehru was not with the Socialists in this, because despite differences he implicitly accepted Gandhiji's leadership and never wanted to weaken it. We saw we could carry on with Nehru whatever the differences but it was difficult to pull on with the others.

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National Language

A FEW days after the Lucknow Congress session, the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan was convened at Nagpur. I was invited to preside over it. So I left Lucknow along with Gandhiji for Wardha from where I was to proceed to Nagpur. I wrote out my presidential address at Wardha. For some time a controversy had developed on whether words of foreign origin should be retained in Hindi or not. In fact, this was a wrong way of looking at things because even a writer who advocated maintenance of the purity of Hindi does never really want to completely boycott foreign words himself nor does he do so in his writings. The real tussle was between Hindi and Urdu. There was a tendency among Hindi writers to borrow more and more from Sanskrit while the Urdu writers had an urge to draw more and more on Arabic and Persian, though there were good writers in both the languages who wrote in simple style. Some feared that Hindi would degenerate into Urdu while others thought that Urdu would be corrupted by Hindi. Some considered Hindi to be the language of the Hindus and Urdu that of the Muslims. Communalism has thus been imported into the lingual controversy, though there were many Hindi poets among Muslims and Urdu poets among Hindus.

The Congress constitution at the instance of Gandhiji and Purushottamdas Tandon, did not use the words Hindi or Urdu but the word "Hindustani". Ever since Gandhiji took up the work of propagating the national language, he did not consider Hindi and Urdu as different languages although there is a difference in vocabulary, a difference which is growing more and more marked, because both the languages have one and the same grammar. In this he had the support of philologists who pointed out that it was not the difference in vocabulary but the difference in grammar which was the distinguishing mark of a language. It was, therefore, not improper to consider Hindi and Urdu as two variants of the same language. Hindustani was something of both, because it

avoided the use of difficult words and could generally be understood both by Hindi as well as Urdu speaking people.

In my opinion, vocabulary is an index of the richness of a language. If there are many synonyms for a word, in course of time they acquire different connotations, making the expression of fine shades of meaning possible. Only a language with such variety is capable of expressing delicate and fine shades of meaning. A living language gains by coming in contact with other languages, thereby enriching its own vocabulary. It is not afraid of being rubbed out of existence by the air and the music outside and it does not shut itself like the snail into its narrow shell. But, of course, the distinctive character of the language should not be impaired by this borrowing. I felt, and I feel today, that foreign words whether of Arabic, Persian or English origin, should be freely absorbed in Hindi but that those words should submit to the discipline of Hindi grammar. In fact, I think that Hindi must borrow from other Indian languages and dialects and it can do so with advantage.

There is another point to be considered. Are modern Hindi and Urdu one language or can they be? In spite of their common grammar, the gulf between their vocabularies is widening day by day. It is quite possible for a person to address a gathering of Hindi and Urdu knowing people in a language which not all of them are able to follow. Hindi so Sanskritised as to be unintelligible to an Urdu-knowing audience is possible just as Urdu laden with Persian and Arabic can be unintelligible to Hindi-knowing people. But at the same time it is possible, and perhaps not very difficult, to use a language I call Hindustani, for addressing public gatherings, writing in newspapers, for stories and for poetry, which will be understood by both groups.

Technical and scientific terms and expressions will ordinarily not be easily intelligible to all, as is the case with all languages. Borrowing will be almost compulsory. Even in English most of the technical terms come from Latin. I think that for technical terms we shall have to seek the aid of Sanskrit or Arabic or even adopt words of European origin. If they are drawn from Sanskrit they would be more intelligible as most of the regional languages draw heavily on Sanskrit. For

example, "jyotish" for "astrology" would be more easily understood in Bengal, Gujerat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nad, Andhra and other regions than "ilme-i-Najoom". The protagonists of Urdu might feel otherwise but I have no doubt that words drawn from Arabic or Persian would be intelligible only to a restricted circle. While, therefore, for purposes of day-to-day business, we can use a language acceptable both to Hindi and Urdu knowing people, the two languages will have to part company in the use of technical terminology, because only those technical terms will be acceptable by all parts of the country which have their roots in Sanskrit. If the protagonists of Urdu must have technical terms drawn from Persian and Arabic, they are welcome to it, but such terms must inevitably remain confined to the Urdu language and will never be absorbed by Indian languages. If this view is accepted much of the conflict between the two languages would disappear.

We want one language for the whole country as a practical necessity. English can never be that language. Hindi is the only language, I think, on which the mantle of national language can fall, call it by whatever name you like — Hindi, Urdu or Hindustani. It will not, of course, displace the regional languages which will continue to be developed and hold the field in their respective regions. The national language will be used only in all-India and inter-State affairs. Overloading it with Arabic and Persian words will make it unwelcome in Assam, Bengal, Utkal, Andhra, Tamil Nad, Karnatak, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujerat and other regions. The national language, further, cannot be narrow in its outlook but has to draw freely from the regional languages. I reiterate that our national requirements will be best answered by a simple Hindi which *will freely adopt words from all the Indian languages and* dialects.

In my own tour throughout the country I had to speak two types of Hindi. In the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province I had to use Hindi with a sprinkling of Persian words while in Bengal, Maharashtra and South India, I could make myself intelligible only with Sanskritised Hindi. I am not a scholar of either Persian or Sanskrit and have no knowledge of Arabic at all. However, I can speak in both the

styles of Hindi so as to make myself clear to both Hindi
Urdu knowing audiences. Paradoxical as it may seem,
strength perhaps lies in my ignorance of these classical lan
ages. Such a national language as I have indicated is a ma
of necessity for a man like myself who is not a scholai
either Sanskrit or Persian and who cannot, therefore, fr
draw upon them and feels compelled to dig out suit
expressions from his limited vocabulary.

These views I incorporated in my presidential address w
I read at the Nagpur session of the Hindi Sahitya Samme
The Sammelan had two objectives, to propagate Hindi
to maintain high literary standards in the language.
tried to see that the two objectives remained compati
Differences arose at the Nagpur session on this point but
difficulty was experienced in framing a practical program
The Sammelan appointed a Rashtrabhasha Prachar Sai
for the propagation of the national language, of which I
made the President.

The Prachar Samiti of the Sammelan was entrusted w
the task of popularising Hindi literature in Hindi-know
provinces and the Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti was
undertake propagation of the language in non-Hindi-know
areas The Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti took over the w
in areas not covered by the Dakshana Bharat Hindi Prac
Sabha which had been working very creditably for m
years in South India. Though I was the President, its po
was laid down by Gandhiji and the burden of collect
funds was on Jamnalal Bajaj. Purushottamdas Tandon, I
Shanker Dubey, Dr. Babu Ram Saksena and some o
prominent members of the Sammelan were in the Rash
bhasha Prachar Samiti which has done splendid work
Maharashtra, Orissa, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, and Guje
Thanks to the co-operation of public-spirited workers and
donations of some of our industrialist friends like Seth Padam
Singhania who gave Rs. 75,000 and above all, Gandh
blessings, the Samiti became established as a succes
institution.

To offset the acrimonious controversies between the
tagonists of Urdu and Hindi and to steer a middle co
Gandhiji founded another organisation called Rashtrabha

Parishad for which he sought the co-operation of Hindi and Urdu scholars alike. The work was entrusted to K. M. Munshi, who occupies a high place among Gujerati men of letters, and he tried to enlist the co-operation of Munshi Prem Chand and Maulvi Abdul Huq and some other writers. At the very first meeting, however, it was found that the Maulvi could not see eye to eye with the founders of the Parishad. K. M. Munshi and Prem Chand brought out a monthly journal called "Hans" under the auspices of the Parishad. Unfortunately, Prem Chand died shortly afterwards, and the Parishad faded away.

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Preparing for Elections to Provincial Assemblies

THE whole of 1936 we were busy preparing for the elections to the provincial legislative assemblies which were to be held early in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935. This was the first time that millions of Indians were getting an opportunity for taking part in elections. To enlist the support of this huge electorate in favour of the Congress was not an easy task. These elections, in which the Congress wanted to put up 2,000 candidates, far dwarfed the elections to the Central Assembly held in 1934 where only 100 members had to be elected. The selection of candidates and collection of funds for fighting the elections, therefore, were difficult jobs.

The first task was to prepare an election manifesto. Important announcements and resolutions used generally to be drafted by Gandhiji. Since Jawaharlal became Congress President, the work was almost always entrusted to him. The manifesto he drafted was an excellent one and was approved by the A.-I.C.C. The Congress had not yet decided on the question of accepting office in the provinces. While some people wanted the Congress to do so and use whatever powers the new Constitution gave them in the service of the people, others wanted the Congress to create deadlocks and prevent the Constitution from being worked. The manifesto, therefore, adroitly avoided any commitment on these points and outlined a general programme based on the Fundamental Rights Resolution of the Karachi Congress.

The Congress manifesto vowed to alleviate the pitiable plight of the peasants and resolved to improve their conditions by amending the system of land tenure. It advocated land-for-the-tiller legislation and promised to reduce the land revenue. To the workers it assured an improvement in their conditions by ensuring security of tenure, improvement of their standards of living, and the right to organise labour

unions. Prohibition was promised for the whole country. In short, all the reforms which a popular ministry was expected to introduce were envisaged in the manifesto. It was understood that if Congressmen formed governments they would give effect to these promises and that if they did not, they would press for their implementation by those who did. Though this manifesto was meant for the whole country and stated the Congress aims in general, the provincial Congress committees were also permitted to draw up their own manifestos suited to local conditions.

The selection of candidates was too difficult a task for the Congress Working Committee to tackle because it had no direct knowledge of the antecedents of candidates. It had, therefore, to depend on the advice of the provincial Congress committees. But there were splinter groups and factions in some provincial committees and hence it was not unlikely that some candidates might be treated unfairly or some of those selected might not enjoy the confidence of the public. Some P.C.C.s wanted that the final authority for selection should vest in the A.-I.C.C. As this would have been unwieldy, a Parliamentary Board, consisting of Sardar Patel (Chairman), Maulana Azad and myself, was set up to select the candidates. The P.C.C.s made the initial selections and passed on the list to the Parliamentary Board which when scrutinising the list considered the appeals of those who were dissatisfied with the P.C.C.'s decision. The Board would then call for the relevant papers and, if necessary, visit the constituency in question to ascertain the wishes of the people and give its final decision. Difficult as this job was, it is indeed gratifying to record that only in very few cases were appeals received by the Board against the decisions of the P.C.C.s Even in such cases, some sort of agreement was arrived at, acceptable to all the parties concerned. Very rarely did the Board feel obliged to give its verdict against some people or groups.

A candidate's submission to Congress discipline and acceptance of the Congress programme and a reasonable chance of his being elected were the two main considerations which guided the Parliamentary Board. There was a factor which had its importance, namely, whether the candidate would be in a position to bear the election expenses himself. This was

not an insignificant consideration. The cost of fighting the elections in 2,000 constituencies was bound to be very high even if we were to be frugal in our expenditure. Most often the quantum of a candidate's expenses depended upon the capacity of his rivals; he would have to spend more than the average where his rivals happened to be wealthy men.

But consideration regarding expenses came only after the other two factors — acceptance of Congress discipline and chances of success. The services rendered by a candidate to the Congress and the people determined the first factor and his popularity in his constituency determined the other. Service of society or membership of a particular caste or tribe might be the reason for a candidate's popularity. In regions where the Congress commanded little influence, other considerations determined the selection of a candidate. The views of the P.C.C.s were most valuable on all these matters. Our greatest hurdle was when more than one good and genuine Congressman applied for a Congress ticket for the same constituency and none of them would withdraw. Our tests of popularity failed in such cases and we were compelled to favour one candidate and incur the displeasure of the others. On the whole, the Parliamentary Board, under Sardar Patel's leadership, was able to surmount all these difficulties.

Apart from participating in the labours of the Parliamentary Board, I had to supervise electioneering in my own province. During my term as Congress President I had not devoted much time to Bihar. In 1936 I was elected President of the P.C.C. and so I thought it necessary to concentrate more on Bihar affairs and tour the province and renew contacts. The District Congress committees in Bihar very rarely take a decision in important matters and leave it to the P.C.C. to decide for them. They took the same attitude during the elections in order to avoid internal differences which might jeopardise the chances of Congress candidates in the elections. It was not easy for the P.C.C. to decide every issue without acquainting itself with the local conditions and I did not like the idea of the P.C.C. deciding for the district committees. However, though there were differences of opinion in some cases and in a few they grew acute, most of the decisions were taken unanimously by the P.C.C. In some instances,

though I held a contrary view, I bowed to the majority opinion, and as far as I remember I never recorded a note of dissent. We were thus able to complete our work of nominations smoothly.

The emphasis was on genuine Congress workers who had rendered service to the country, who had stood the test of time and who could be expected to carry out the party mandate in future. But in some instances, local conditions and monetary considerations compelled us to accommodate Congress sympathisers who had never been active members of the organisation. Swami Sahajanand, a member of the provincial Congress working committee and a leader of the Kisan Sabha, which since 1933 had been very active in the districts of Patna and Gaya, submitted to us a list of persons actively associated with the Kisan Sabha for nomination as candidates. The leadership of the Congress and the Kisan Sabha had been more or less common and the two organisations had worked hand in hand. Most of the names suggested by Swami Sahajanand, therefore, were accepted by the Congress Working Committee, though, in view of the differences which arose over some cases, a contest between the Congress and Kisan Sabha candidates appeared inevitable. But luckily, the difficulties were tided over and an amicable settlement was arrived at in all matters.

Another peculiar feature of the nominations were considerations of caste. The Congress abhorred the idea but local circumstances compelled it to submit to it. It is a matter of shame that in Bihar, the P.C.C. had to take caste labels into account in certain constituencies because the success of candidates there depended on such considerations. Further, we had to give adequate representation to all prominent castes. It is disgraceful for an organisation like the Congress to do so but success in the elections was our first objective and secondly, it should not be overlooked that the Congress is a widespread organisation consisting of people of all castes. The fact, however, remains that though from the point of view of practical politics our nominations proved a great success, we ought not to have even thought in terms of class or caste distinctions.

Sixteen seats were reserved for Harijans in the Bihar Assembly, according to the Poona Pact. We put up candidates for all the seats in consultation with prominent Harijan

leaders and workers and we were able to get excellent representatives popular with their community. Most of them were returned unopposed and in the few constituencies in which there were contests they had an easy victory. This resulted in a considerable reduction in the election expenses. In Bihar there is widespread lack of education among Harijans and they accepted the Congress leadership and had no desire to form a separate organisation of their own or to have separate leadership to fulfil the ambitions of some people. By carrying an overwhelming majority of Harijans with us, we were saved from the dissensions that were the lot of some other provinces, where there were cleavages among the Harijan community, a section of it opposing the Congress.

Selection of candidates completed, the next step was the electioneering campaign. Collection of funds was the responsibility of the Central Parliamentary Board, but Sardar Patel took that task mostly on himself. The P.C.C.s also made their own collections as far as they could. In Bihar, where most of the candidates were genuine Congress workers and most of them poor, provision of funds was quite a problem. Several of the candidates, however, were able to manage for themselves and the Parliamentary Board did what it could for the others. Some expenses for carrying the Congress message to the masses and establishing contact between the voter and the candidate were inevitable and in a big province like Bihar the expenditure on these items was not inconsiderable. We had to distribute the Congress manifesto and other Congress literature widely among the public, not only to improve our election prospects but to educate the public. Expenditure on this item was unavoidable. Transport was another item of expenditure. Although the cost of elections had to be borne by the Bihar Parliamentary Board, it was kept down to the absolute minimum.

But judged by Gandhiji's standards we certainly could not claim to have been frugal. He thought that the Congress hold over the confidence of the people by its selfless service should be such that the mere distribution of the Congress manifesto and a list of Congress candidates should be enough to bring the voters to the polling booths on their own and to make them vote for the Congress. The Mahatma felt that

there should be no need for canvassing for votes or persuasion to make people vote for the Congress. This is undoubtedly true but we had not yet reached that ideal of service. But it cannot be gainsaid that the confidence which we inspired in the minds of the people was in proportion to the service rendered by us and our success in the elections was in the same proportion. Twenty years' service had not gone in vain. But it has to be remembered that this service should be made more extensive, more stable and that selfish motives and personal ambitions should be eschewed.

I cannot but record here the fact that many Congress workers have started assessing their services in terms of rewards in the form of membership of a legislative assembly, municipality or district board or at least a place of honour and power in a Congress committee. There is no doubt that in all these places there is scope for doing service and in some cases one's capacity to serve is enhanced by such an opportunity. But how is one to judge whether one is motivated by a desire for service or personal ambition. If a place is sought with a view to securing an opportunity for service, there can be nothing against it. But I am afraid one cannot be too sure as self-deception is not an uncommon occurrence. Our minds often hoodwink us by spreading a veneer of altruism to cover personal ambitions.

Gandhiji once said that one who aspired to be Congress President should never be elected President and that that office should be reserved for those who did not pursue it and were only anxious to serve. One whose principal objective is to serve and not to hanker after a place accepts the presidentship as a mandate which has to be accepted for the sake of service. This holds good for all offices attainable through elections. But unfortunately, conditions today are such that one seeking election has to do a lot of publicity for oneself. Ambition has taken the place of modesty and office is considered a means for personal advancement. All this is contrary to Indian culture and more in consonance with western ideals, which have perhaps inevitably permeated our thinking.

One cannot even suggest today that one should not oneself stand for an election and that it should be left to those who have the right to elect to decide as to who they consider the

fittest person. If the electors' choice falls on one, one should obey the mandate and render such service as one can. Unless some such idea is accepted and acted upon, I am afraid we shall be far away from real democracy. We must promote and strengthen the feeling of service and sacrifice and discourage and minimise the yearning for fruits of service. Our principal aim should be service and not self-aggrandisement.

Jawaharlal was re-elected to preside over the Congress session at Faizpur, a village in Khandesh (Maharashtra), in December 1936. It was for the third time that Jawaharlal was to be Congress President. The venue was fixed in deference to Gandhiji's wishes that Congress sessions should in future be held in villages. He thought it would create a lot of enthusiasm for the Congress among the village people because they would have to take part in the reception arrangements. Secondly, the villagers would also benefit from whatever was spent on arrangements on reception, boarding and lodging of delegates and visitors. With that aim, he wanted local products only to be used in the construction of the pandal and in all the arrangements for the session, as it would give a fillip to cottage industries. Further Gandhiji insisted that the Maharashtra Congress Committee should buy as far as possible only cottage industry products for the needs of the Congress session.

The annual sessions of the Congress used to be elaborate affairs and whatever the venue of a session, large-scale arrangements had to be made for it. If a session were to be held in a village, the work became more difficult, because many facilities were lacking. Special arrangements had to be made for water supply, electricity, sanitation and other such facilities for lakhs of people. The arrangement for water supply proved beneficial to the villagers even after the session. Similarly the huts and other structures raised for the duration came to be put to good use by the villagers later. As desired by Gandhiji most of the things used in the construction were of local make. Art objects used for purposes of decoration came from the village or the neighbouring areas. Nandlal Bose, the famous artist of Visvabharati, was in charge of decorating the Congress Nagar, the pandal and the exhibition, and he made an excellent job of it. The most remarkable thing was

that the only materials he used were local bamboo and wood. The simple designs of the gates and other improvised devices lent great charm to the decorations. The attraction of the Faizpur session lay in its simplicity.

As the session was held in the last week of December, it was fairly cold and visitors and delegates were inconvenienced because they had no shelter to protect them against the chill. Thousands of them had to spend the night in the open. Gandhiji was moved by the sight and he advised the Working Committee to hold all future sessions in March.

The elections which were just a few days off dominated the session. Many prominent workers were unable to attend it because of pre-occupation with the election in their areas. To accept or not to accept office came up again for discussion. Jawaharlal was against forming ministries in the provinces while most Congressmen were in favour of accepting office. But the time had not arrived for a decision and so the matter was left for the A.-I.C.C. to decide after the elections were over and the results known.

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Success at the Polls

After the Faizpur Congress session, all the provincial Congress committees turned their attention to the election campaign. Jawaharlal Nehru, who had started his whirlwind tour of the country even while the Parliamentary Board was busy with the selection of candidates, continued his triumphal campaign. I do not think that any Congress President had ever strained himself to that extent and done so much to awaken the masses as he did. He thought, and I believe rightly, that it was impossible for the Congress to reach each one of the voters and even if it did no one could foretell for whom they would vote. So Jawaharlal felt that what was most desirable and possible was to create an atmosphere in the country so that even if one tried one could not go against it. By his indefatigable work he was able to create such an atmosphere, and it paid dividends.

We invited Jawaharlal to tour some parts of Bihar. He came a few days after the Faizpur Congress. I was fit enough to go with him, but as it was impossible for Nehru to visit every place, I did not accompany him and, instead, drew up an itinerary for myself to visit the areas not covered by him. Thus between us we were able to cover the whole province. Pandit Pant also visited Bihar and toured some areas. When we saw the popular enthusiasm we had no doubt about our success. When the results were announced our optimism was more than justified.

In Bihar, out of 16 seats reserved for Harijans, the Congress bagged 15. Of the seats reserved for women (Hindus), three were captured by the Congress. Of the seats reserved for labour, we got all but one. The Congress set up a candidate for one seat only in constituencies reserved for the zamindars but lost even that. But this was anticipated and it caused no disappointment. Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha defeated the Congress candidate in the university constituency.

About forty seats were reseved for Muslims in the Bihar Assembly. Efforts were made for forming some sort of an

election alliance between the Congress and other nationalist Muslims. Some Muslims thought that the Congress should contest every Muslim seat. Others favoured a pact between the Congress and nationalist Muslims. Because of the differences the Congress was in a quandary. Some Congress Muslims were, however, put up and a few of them were not opposed by other nationalist Muslims. There were other Muslim parties in the field, but the Muslim League did not command much influence in Bihar and, as far as I remember, did not contest a single seat.

With the help of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, a new party was organised in Bihar. The principal founder of the party was Maulana Abul Mohsin Mohammed Sajjad, the famous Jamiat leader. Mohammed Yunus joined the party which appeared to be the strongest Muslim party in the province. The Congress entered into a pact with it, promising full support to its nominees who were Congressmen in all but name and had suffered imprisonment. This party captured the largest number of Muslim seats. After the elections, however, the Muslim League began to gain influence.

After the elections had ended in Bihar, many Congress workers went to the U.P. to help in the campaign there. I also toured that province for a few days, covering several districts of Oudh, Dhampur where the contest was keen, and the Tarai (sub-montane) area which, hardly accessible to motorists, had not previously been visited by any Congress leader. I visited only one place in the Tarai where a large gathering turned out to hear me. The Congress won in that constituency by a narrow margin. Then I proceeded to the Central Provinces. I visited places near Katni in Jabalpur district and made a strenuous tour of Bilaspur district, where in one constituency Raghavendra Rao won against a Congress candidate.

Maharashtra and Karnatak then took up my attention. I toured Maharashtra for several days but our success was not very outstanding. One meeting which I had to address and for which I was delayed could not be held because of the tactics of a member of a rival party who told the gathering that I had been detained elsewhere and that I would not be coming. The Congress won a number of seats, though not as

many as we expected. The worst defeat was in Ratnagiri where the Maharashtra Congress had hoped to win. In Karnatak we met with one or two unexpected defeats, but by now we had learnt to adjust ourselves to setbacks so common in elections. Andhra was the last province I visited, where I could cover only Bellary district. Elections had by now ended in most of the provinces. On my way back home I went to Wardha.

The Congress won a majority over the combined voting strength of other parties in six provinces — Bihar, Orissa, the U.P., the C.P., Madras and Bombay. Madras claimed the distinction of having registered the most decisive verdict, as the Congress captured 159 seats out of 215 in the Lower House, while in Bombay it had a majority only of one in a House of 175. In Bengal and Assam, the Congress was the largest single party but did not have an absolute majority. In the North-West Frontier Province, the Congress, with only 19 seats, was outnumbered by the No-Party Muslims who bagged 21 seats. In the Punjab, the Unionists held an absolute majority with 99 seats out of 175, the Congress having to content itself with just 18 seats. In Sind, we had the poorest total, 8 seats in a House of 60.

The question whether to accept office in the provinces where the Congress had secured a majority now came up for consideration. A meeting of the A.-I.C.C. was called at Delhi to consider the issue. The Congress President at the same time called a convention of all Congress M.L.A.s for their taking the oath of allegiance and loyalty to the organisation. This ceremony was performed amid scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm. At the A.-I.C.C. meeting, Gandhiji suggested that the Congress should form ministries only if the Governors gave an assurance that they would not, in practice, use the special overriding powers vested in them under the Government of India Act and would act in all matters on the advice of the Council of Ministers. He stressed this condition for accepting office because, he said, if the Governors were to resort to their special powers, the Congress ministries would be bound hand and foot from the very start.

Those who were strongly in favour of accepting office did not like this development because they thought that the

British Government would never agree to do anything directly or indirectly which would render the Constitution inoperative. Those who opposed office acceptance were happy that no Congress ministries were possible now. In the discussion that followed, Gandhiji stood his ground and declared that it would indeed be a mistake if the Congress did not form ministries but it would be a greater mistake if it were to agree to do so without obtaining the undertaking he had suggested from the Governors. The Governors' special powers had been subjected to much criticism at the time of the framing of the Constitution. This provision was one of the main reasons why the Constitution was rejected. Now Gandhiji by his condition sought to nullify this very Constitutional provision. The A.-I.C.C. then accepted Gandhiji's suggestion and directed the Congress M.L.A.s to elect their leaders who would accept office, when the Governors invited them, only on a public undertaking to abide by the condition of non-interference.

The provincial legislature parties met to elect their leaders. In Bihar I called a meeting of the Provincial Congress Committee and the Congress M.L.A.s. I desired that the nomination should be unanimous and that group rivalries should be avoided. I found several candidates were being named and vigorous canvassing going on and I feared a tussle developing at the meeting. When the proponents of the various nominees came to me I told them not to talk in terms of groups but first to ascertain the wishes of each nominee. The meeting authorised me to consult prominent Congressmen of every district and after gauging their opinion to give my decision as to who should be the leader of the party. I accepted the decision as it would obviate voting and the attendant wrangles.

Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha, Anugrah Narain Sinha, Dr. Syed Mahmud and Ram Dayalu Sinha were four of the leaders who had been suggested. Among them, Dr. Mahmud had been a member of the A.-I.C.C. and the Working Committee for many years and had been General Secretary of the Congress and the Khilafat Committee. Since he had been working outside the province, he was not so well known as the other persons. Ram Dayalu Sinha was a reputed Congressman who was strongly supported by some, but a section of Congressmen, even including some from his own district, were strongly

opposed to him. So he was ruled out. Anugrah Narain Sinha was a capable organiser and administrator, but he told me that he did not want the honour and that others were canvassing for him despite his unwillingness. Sri Krishna Sinha had won great popularity in the province by his oratory, dauntless courage and self-sacrifice. After weighing all factors I decided that the mantle of leadership of the legislature party should fall on S. K. Sinha.

Some people were annoyed at this and protested that, having made my choice, I canvassed for that man and enlisted the support of the representatives from the districts. It was not correct and even if it were so, there was nothing wrong in it and I would not have hesitated to acknowledge it. The fact was that the consensus of opinion favoured the election of either S. K. Sinha or A. N. Sinha and, as the latter did not like to run for leadership, my choice fell on S. K. Sinha. I told them that I wanted to prevent the names of both of them being proposed. Eventually, only S. K. Sinha was proposed for leadership and he was unanimously elected.

This decision caused a feeling of bitterness among Muslims, particularly among non-Congress Muslims. They complained that Dr. Syed Mahmud was ignored only because of his being a Muslim although in all-India Congress circles he was better known and had worked longer than S. K. Sinha. The matter was even represented to Maulana Azad and he retorted to the discontented complainants that, had he been in my place, perhaps his decision too would have been the same. Looking at the whole affair in retrospect, even today I feel I committed no mistake in preferring Dr. Sinha to Dr. Mahmud. It does not mean that I do not have the same affection and esteem for Dr. Mahmud that I have for Dr. Sinha. He does have admirable qualities, but on such occasions when a person has to be chosen for a particular job in the interests of the nation, one man has to be singled out and that is all that I did. I had a sense of satisfaction for having done the right thing and that is how I feel even today.

In the U.P. and Madras there were no differences of opinion in the matter of selecting the leader. Just as Govind Ballabh Pant was the only person the people of the U.P. could think of, it was impossible to think in terms of a rival to

C. Rajagopalachari. Bombay selected Balasaheb Kher. Though in character and ability he was second to none, he was extremely unassuming and was not so well known in the province. He had without doubt the necessary drive and intellectual merit, but for Bombay Congressmen it was a surprise election. The election was not so smooth in the Central Provinces and Orissa where it led to a good deal of heart burning and bickering, later resulting in internal dissensions and group rivalries.

The invitation to form a Congress ministry came first in Madras where the Governor, Lord Erskine, called on C. Rajagopalachari, the leader of the Congress Legislature Party, to help form a ministry. Rajaji laid down the condition of non-interference that the Working Committee had enjoined on the Congress legislature parties to stipulate. The Governor refused to give the assurance that he would not use the special powers vested in him under the Constitution on the plea that his acceptance would amount to changing the Constitution, on which Rajaji declined to form a ministry. The same formality was repeated in the other provinces where the Congress was in a majority.

The British Government did not want to discard the Constitution which it had framed after so much labour and on which it prided itself so much. It perhaps thought that Congressmen would not be able to resist the lure of office for long and if it succeeded in getting ministries formed of persons willing to work the Constitution, it would be able to cause split in the Congress ranks and wean away some weak men from the party. Efforts were, therefore, made in the six provinces where the Congress was in absolute majority to form some sort of ministries. It is a matter of pride for the Congress that the Government failed to persuade a single Congressman to walk into the trap. The Government then turned to non-Congressmen and proceeded with the task of forming ministries, hoping that within the six months that the Governor was permitted under the Constitution to carry on the administration of a province with the help of any ministry of his choice it would be able to disrupt Congress solidarity.

In Bihar, Mohammed Yunus, who had been elected leader of the Independent Muslim Party's legislature group, was

invited to form a ministry. Maulana Sajjad, the principal founder of that party, had been thought to be a Congress sympathiser. Thinking that the Maulana had accepted nearly the whole of the Congress programme several Congress Muslims joined the Independent Muslim Party in the hope that it would improve their election chances. When the offer of office came, however, the Maulana faltered and asked Yunus to accept the Governor's invitation. Hectic activity followed, and there were rumours of all kinds. It was said that the Congress Muslims who were in the minority in the party were opposed to office acceptance, while others alleged that the party was never actually consulted and that when it was discussing the issue, Yunus had already agreed to form a Government and had even submitted a list of ministers to the Governor who had approved of it. The party, therefore, was faced with a *fait accompli* and could do nothing.

Then an interesting thing happened. Yunus offered one seat in his Cabinet to a Harijan member of the Assembly, Jagjivan Ram. He even took him to the Governor for talks. This caused some concern among us but I was unperturbed because I was sure that Jagjivan Ram would never take the bait. I was proved right; he refused to join the Yunus ministry. Yunus could not persuade a single Congressman to walk into his Cabinet. We were not worried at the turn of events because we were in such an overwhelming majority in the Assembly that we could topple the ministry if after six months it faced the Assembly. On the day the Yunus ministry was sworn in, hostile demonstrations, led by Jayaprakash Narayan, were held in Patna. Jayaprakash was arrested and sentenced to imprisonment but was released by Yunus before the completion of the term.

Ministries on the same model were formed in other provinces where the Congress held a majority. It was just a farce to show people that the Constitution was being worked. The Government knew only too well that the ministries were to be short-lived affairs but it went on hoping and trying by some means or other to disrupt Congress unity. The Congressmen who had opposed the acceptance of office were happy that after all Congress ministries had not been formed and that in time they would be able to create deadlocks. On the

hand, those in favour of office acceptance were con-
that sooner or later the British Government would have
me down and give the Congress the assurance it had
for. The interim ministries, in the meantime, tried their
to make themselves popular but their efforts did not
them far. Statements protesting its good intentions were
d by the Government from time to time but the Congress
ted them as inadequate.

last, after the interim ministries had been in office for
months, the Viceroy made an announcement. It seemed
nost promising statement made so far and the Congress
ing Committee sought clarification of some points. The
rnment of India could not say publicly and unequi-
lly that some sections of the Constitution had become
rative nor was it authorised to say so, but in an indirect
ier it made it plain that though the special powers of
Governors would remain vested in them, they would
normally make use of them. As this had not been said
ar language, the Congress sought for a definite statement.
he same time, the Working Committee authorised the
ress legislature party leaders to form Governments
ld they be called upon by the Governors to do so after
ng clarification on the question of their special powers.
Working Committee's decision paved the way to the
ation of Congress Governments.

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Congress Forms Ministries

With the formation of ministries now a foregone conclusion, the provincial Congress committees began to discuss the question of the personnel of the Congress Cabinets. The Bihar P.C.C. met at Masrakh, a village in Saran district, Abdul Bari presiding. After preliminary discussions we parted. On our way back we heard at Chapra that a courier had brought a communication from Government House to S. K. Sinha, inviting him to meet the Governor. We discussed the preliminaries with Sri Krishna Sinha and advised him that if he was satisfied with the clarification, he should ask for some time to decide on his Cabinet. The P.C.C. then met in Patna to decide finally on the names of ministers.

The selection of ministers was a knotty problem. The Governor's Executive Council in Bihar had only four members, and I thought that if four men could do the job then, four ministers ought to be sufficient to run the Congress Government now. If we took in more men it might be said that we were trying to create jobs for needy persons. In other provinces where Congress ministries had been formed, the number of ministers was larger than that of the earlier Executive Councils and I had criticised that fact. Though the expenditure was not likely to go up in view of the Congress directive that the ministers should not draw more than Rs. 500 as salary, I somehow felt that the number of ministers in Bihar at least should not exceed four. I must confess, however, that, in the light of my experience later, I was wrong. Our ministers were not familiar with administrative work. Since they had to follow a new programme and formulate new policies, for which time was required to collect the necessary data and form public opinion, I realised that four ministers were not enough and I, therefore, modified my views later.

But there was another factor which influenced our decision not to have too many ministers. There were certain people in the legislature party who, because of their merits, automatically walked into the Cabinet, but if we looked further

ahead, the problem of selecting ministers presented limitless difficulties. So in order to avoid possible bickerings we thought of limiting the Cabinet to four.

We were all agreed that one of the ministers should be a Harijan. For many the obvious choice was Jagjivan Ram, who was able and enthusiastic, and who rose above the temptation of office and refused Yunus's offer to him. But there was an equally prominent Congressman, Jaglal Chaudhury, who responded to the call of the Congress in 1920, gave up his studies when in the final year in the Calcutta Medical College and had since been devoting himself solely to the Congress constructive work. He had suffered imprisonment also. After weighing all the facts, we decided to name Jaglal Chaudhury as Minister and Jagjivan Ram as Parliamentary Secretary.

Ramnarain Singh, a Congressman and a member of the Central Legislative Assembly, canvassed for representation for Chota Nagpur in the ministry. His argument was that Chota Nagpur was a backward area and that the Congress had not given proper attention to its development. In fact, he had been complaining to me about this in a friendly way and sought to reinforce his argument by pointing out that I had never cared to stay for any considerable period in Chota Nagpur. I retorted light-heartedly that during the last 20 years or so, at no other place had I lived for so long as in Chota Nagpur, because it was in Hazaribagh Jail that I served my jail sentences. He insisted that Chota Nagpur must be represented in the Cabinet. Were we to accede to his request, the only suitable candidate would have been none other than Ramnarain Singh himself, an indefatigable worker. That would have meant his resignation from the Central Assembly and his election to the Bihar Assembly within six months after a sitting member had made way for him. This would have incurred the displeasure of the Chota Nagpur M.L.A.s who would take it as a slur on themselves, and rightly too. We found it impossible, therefore, to submit to his demand. He was very much upset and wrote several letters to me. I replied to them without being able to satisfy him. But it is all part of the political game. A man like me who feels miserable in causing any illwill or bitterness is in a quandary when things

like this happen. But one has to do one's duty and I think that my decision was fair and correct.

Our choice, therefore, was this: Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha to be Chief Minister, assisted by Dr. Syed Mahmud, Anugrah Narain Sinha and Jaglal Chaudhury. Eight Parliamentary Secretaries were to be attached to them; among these were Krishna Ballabh Sahay, Sharangadhar Sinha, Jimutbahan Sen, Binodanand Jha, Shivanandan Prasad Mandal, Jagjivan Ram, and Sadiq-ul Haq. Ramdayalu Singh was elected Speaker and Abdul Bari, Deputy Speaker. Although some people felt that the selection could be improved upon, I considered it satisfactory.

After the Cabinet was formed I advised all the ministers to live near each other, failing which to meet every day for mutual consultations. I felt that they should regularly apprise each other of the working of their departments so that every minister would know about all the departments and they would be able to work as a team. When an important decision was to be taken they could discuss the matter jointly to be able to pool tact and experience. This, however, never happened in Bihar. In fact, I learnt later that no minister knew anything of what was happening in another ministry. In Bombay, on the other hand, B. G. Kher gave effect to the policy of joint consultations and used to hold informal meetings of the Cabinet every day. In the U.P. and Madras, Govind Ballabh Pant and C. Rajagopalachari, two dominant personalities, were able to keep themselves informed of everything happening in every department.

I had to go to Orissa as there was a fear of internal differences manifesting themselves during the ministry making. The dispute over the choice of leader of the Assembly Party was not settled and the matter had come to the Parliamentary Board. Pandit Nilakantha Das was among the foremost Congressmen there, having joined the Congress in 1921. He was a colleague of the late Gopebandhu Das and had served his jail terms with me in Hazaribagh Jail. I remember that even in 1933–34, while we were in jail, Pandit Nilakantha Das favoured the acceptance of office by the Congress. In 1934 he was elected to the Central Assembly on the Congress ticket. He did not seek election to the provincial assembly

in 1937, but after the general elections were over and the Congress was ready to accept office, Das expressed to some of his friends his desire to be elected leader of the Legislature Party. It was true that he had worked tirelessly during the provincial elections and could claim some credit for the Congress success. But the problem before the new Congress M.L.A.s was how to elect as leader a person who was not a member of the Assembly. It was thought that when the Governor invited a Congressman to form a ministry it would be a member of the Assembly that he would call and not an outsider, though an outsider could be a minister if he could be elected to the Assembly within six months. Nilakantha Das aspired to be the Chief Minister as he felt that his position and status in the province fully fitted him for that office. But the Parliamentary Board decided that the leader of the Legislature Party should be a member of the Assembly. So Nilakantha Das was ruled out and Bishwanath Das, who hailed from Burhampur district and who, when that district formed part of Madras province, had been a member of the Madras Legislative Assembly, was elected leader of the Assembly Party.

The question of a Muslim minister was another tricky problem in Orissa. The number of Muslim members in the Assembly was very small. There was a Muslim minister in the Interim Ministry but there was no Congress Muslim M.L.A. Such of those Muslims as were able and could have been eligible for the post of minister were not elected on the Congress ticket and were unwilling now to join the Congress. In spite of my best efforts, therefore, I did not succeed and leaving the vacancy to be filled later in consultation with Maulana Azad, I left Orissa.

There was difficulty in the U.P. too on the selection of Muslim ministers, and Maulana Azad went there to resolve the difficulty. Except for one Muslim who was elected on the Congress ticket, all the other Muslims had been elected as Independents. Some of them were Congress sympathisers and were willing to arrive at some settlement with the Maulana. But prominent Congressmen of the province opposed this and the Maulana could not stay longer as he had to go to Bombay. So Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Congress M.L.A., and

Hafiz Mohammed Ibrahim, an Independent, were appointed ministers. Soon afterwards Hafiz Ibrahim resigned his seat in the Assembly and got re-elected on a Congress ticket. The other Muslims were disgruntled. Possibly, if the proposed agreement between the Independent Muslims and the Congress had materialised, the communal animosity which the Muslim League whipped up later might never have been brought about. In Bombay, M. Y. Nurie was made a minister and in the Central Provinces, Sherif was selected.

I am dealing in detail with the appointment of Muslim ministers because one of the main grievances of the Muslim League against the Congress was in regard to this issue. When the Congress and other parties formed ministries, they looked upon the British Cabinet as a model and wanted to follow the same conventions and traditions. Thus the different parties set up their own candidates and when the ministries were formed it was the majority party that exclusively provided the ministers. Congressmen thought it contrary to the spirit of parliamentary democracy to appoint any outsider in their ministry. Besides, there were Muslims in the Congress and preference to non-Congress Muslims would have been unfair to them. Appointment of Muslim Leaguers as ministers in provinces where the Congress had been returned in a majority would have been unconstitutional.

As a matter of fact, the Muslim League had not acquired any great prestige and popularity at that time. It had put up only a few candidates here and there and had failed in many places. The Congress, therefore, had no reason to take a Muslim Leaguer as minister. Further, we had fought the elections on the Congress manifesto and when we came to power it was our duty to implement the pledges embodied in the manifesto. It was stated therein that in case of its inability to do so, the Congress would immediately withdraw from office, and it was only the Congressmen who took that pledge. Resignation from office was a great weapon with the Congress, which was as constitutional as it was effective in bringing the Governors round in case of differences. Had the Congress included any non-Congressmen in the Cabinet without their signing the Congress pledge, it would have found it difficult to wield this weapon of resignation. Then there is the principle of joint

responsibility. It is considered essential that all ministers should belong to one party, unless it be that the party position is such that a coalition cabinet has to be formed, so that they might carry on the administration jointly and not pursue independent and contradictory policies. Despite all these considerations, earnest efforts were made to come to an agreement with non-Congress Muslims, but we failed.

Looking back, I am still of the view that we did not commit any constitutional impropriety in the early days of provincial autonomy. So long as we were wedded to democracy and accepted the British system of parliamentary government we did nothing in thought or deed to infringe those conventions. It is a different matter if one thinks that we should not have followed the British system and should have developed our own conventions. No one suggested it at the time. I do not think the idea that India should have a system of Government other than democratic ever crossed anyone's mind unless it be that of Muslim Leaguers. I do not believe India would ever agree to forsake democracy. If she did so, it would mean entrusting the fate of the country to the hands of a single individual or a group of people. I do not think that even the Muslims liked the idea. No political party has ever expressed the view that democracy is not possible in India or that another system of Government should be introduced here. The Muslim League was the only political organisation which expressed the view on one or two occasions that India as a whole should not have *full* democracy.

By the end of July 1937, Congress Governments had been formed in the six provinces of Bihar, Bombay, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, Orissa and Madras. In all these provinces the Interim Ministries resigned without facing the Assemblies. In the North-West Frontier Province, as the Congress was not in a majority, the No-Party Muslims had formed a ministry, but it did not last long for, after the Congress had come to power in the six provinces, it was defeated in the Assembly. Maulana Azad and I were requested to go to the North-West Frontier Province to help the Congress group there to form a Government. Our mission was not difficult. In fact, Dr. Khan Sahib and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan

managed things so well that neither of us had to do anything beyond approving of what they did. A Congress Government under the leadership of Dr. Khan Sahib came into being.

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Journey to the Frontier Province

THE trip with Maulana Azad was my first visit to the Frontier Province. We went straight to Abbottabad, a hill station and the seat of the Government in summer, where the Congress leaders were conducting the negotiations with the Governor. The people had made arrangements to take us out in a procession, but the Maulana excused himself and went straight to where he was put up. I had to join the procession which was caught in a downpour and all of us were drenched. After the successful conclusion of the negotiations, the Maulana and I went on a small tour of the province. We visited Mansehra, where, from the dak bungalow one could get a beautiful view of the rugged hills all round. Then we left for Peshawar. The next place on the itinerary was Utmanzai, Dr. Khan Sahib's village, where we went *via* Charsadda. After a short stay, we returned to Peshawar through the tribal area.

The next day we crossed the Khyber Valley and came to the Durand Line which, at the time, separated British Indian territory from Afghan territory. On both sides of the border we saw armed sentries of the two countries standing guard. In summer, the Khyber Valley is a blazing inferno. Though rugged and devoid of vegetation, it is a peculiarly charming place and the view one gets from the road while one passes through the valley is magnificent. The whole place bristles with defence establishments. The entrance to the valley which is several miles long is commanded by a fort and in the centre of the valley is another fort. Along the road runs a railway track which must have taxed the skill of engineers and which must have cost a great deal. Here, only the road belonged to Britain; the territory all round was free territory belonging to the tribes. The British writ did not run in the area and if an incident occurred a few yards off the road, the culprit could not be tried in a British court of law. We saw the tribal people always carrying guns with them and we heard that if by chance a traveller strayed into their territory, they shot him up, if only to demonstrate their rights.

In every village there is a high tower from which one can get a good view all round. It is used by the tribes for keeping a watch against intruders. The people are poor because the rocky soil does not yield much. Water too is very scarce. The land in Charsadda in Peshawar district, on the other hand, where the Swat and other rivers flow, is fertile. The poverty of the people was the main reason for the unsettled condition in which they lived. I do not think any attempt was ever made to improve their lot economically. Perhaps, as a matter of policy, the British Government desired to perpetuate their unsettled conditions, because I am sure that, had it used the money it spent on defence in that area for development purposes, the place would have been turned into a fertile valley and the tribals would be competing with people of other provinces in agriculture. It might be that the Government was not able to take any such measures as long as the tribals were free, but I wonder why it did not occur to the British that lovers of freedom could also be excellent neighbours. With the same money which went to suppress them from time to time with planes and guns, those people could have been educated and placed on a better economic footing. That money would have been well spent and would have proved advantageous both to the tribes and India.

While returning to Patna, Mathura Prasad and I stopped at Taxila (Takshashila). We went round to see the ruins which were scattered over a vast area and saw the museum where excavated materials were on view. The ancient city must have been big, well-developed and prosperous, with wide roads and rows of houses on both sides and its citizens must have enjoyed all amenities of life. In Taxila was located a famous University which attracted students from far and near. It was said that monuments of the Buddhistic era were found all over the province. We would have liked to see more of them but we had no time and had to drop Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan from our itinerary.

To me, a resident of Bihar, who rarely gets an opportunity to see any army establishment beyond the Cantonment of Danapore, the N.-W.F. Province appeared like a huge army base. Wherever one went one saw cantonments, military roads and armed camps. In fact, right from the Punjab as we

proceeded further westwards we saw the armed forces everywhere.

The Khyber Valley is a valley which lends itself easily to defence. It was particularly more so in the pre-aeroplane age. I thought Providence had conferred on India an excellent barrier in the shape of the Himalayan range and the mountains in the east and the west, while in the south, the sea protected her from all external dangers. How unlucky we were that with all that Nature provided us with for defence we were unable to protect ourselves because of internal differences! All the foreign invaders who entered India before the British came through the Khyber Pass. The British, while they were here, were afraid of another foreigner invading India through the Passes in the north and spent a lot to strengthen the defences of the northern region.

After the advent of the air force, the importance of the Khyber Pass is no longer what it was. But looking back, it is impossible not to regret that even with Nature's own fortification we failed to protect ourselves and allowed invaders to come in. The Khyber Pass and India's history bear testimony to the fact that no country can hope to derive benefit from natural barriers unless it is properly organised and is able to defend itself. A nation incapable of taking advantage of its natural resources is bound to fall a prey to ambitious aggressors. Just as when I saw Cape Comorin it conjured up a vision of India's greatness, the Khyber Pass, as I stood facing it, brought in my mind's eye India's incapacity and ineptitude.

Shortly after my return from the N.-W.F.P., the Bihar Ministry came up against a problem which it was thought necessary to solve early. Sir Sultan Ahmed had been appointed Advocate-General of Bihar by the Yunus Ministry. Shortly afterwards, he became a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and continued to hold that post when the Congress came to power in Bihar. It was learnt that as member of the Executive Council he had advised compromise with the Congress. The Delhi appointment was temporary and Sir Sultan, it was understood, would be available after some time. The Ministry was faced with the question whether it should endorse the appointment of the Yunus Government or appoint another Advocate-General.

The Congress Government felt it necessary that it should appoint its own Advocate-General. The reason was simple. The Advocate-General, the principal legal adviser of the Cabinet, was authorised under the new Constitution to address the Assembly on any subject without being a member of the Legislature. This right had been given to him in order that when legal questions came up in debates in the House, the Government would have an authoritative person to speak on the subject on its behalf. The Bihar Ministry thought that the Advocate-General should have the same rank and position in the provincial set-up which the Attorney-General had in England, where, as the principal legal adviser, he is included in the Cabinet and is a member of the House of Commons and is appointed afresh by each new ministry. (The post of Lord Chancellor, the highest legal authority who takes the chair when an appeal comes up before the House of Lords, is similarly filled afresh by each incoming Government.) The new Ministry thought that the Advocate-General should be appointed and relieved along with a ministry just as in England.

The argument was quite reasonable because a ministry should have the right to appoint as its legal adviser one in whom it has complete confidence and who, it considers, is generally in agreement with its views and programme. For example, the biggest problem before the Bihar Ministry was that of amending the land tenure laws, and in such a controversial issue, the services of a staunch Congressman were essential in order to help in the drafting of the law as well as its passage. Sir Sultan Ahmed, an independent man, was likely to have his own views on the subject and was not expected to see eye to eye with the Congress. In view of all this, after consultation with me, the Ministry decided to appoint another Advocate-General. It was also thought that this would set a correct precedent for future ministries.

When Sri Krishna Sinha broached the question with the Governor, he did not concede the right of the new Government to make the appointment. He then wrote to Sir Sultan, who held the portfolio of Law at the Centre, but as Sir Sultan's tenure in that office was extended he resigned his post of Advocate-General in Bihar. The tangle was thus solved easily and the Bihar Government appointed Baldev Sahay in his

place, but this had its repercussions later when the Muslims turned it into a communal issue, complaining that it had been sought to remove Sir Sultan to make place for a Hindu. From what I have said, however, it should be clear that the communal aspect never influenced the Ministry in its decision. The question was an entirely political one. In fact, the same issue arose in Bombay also, the Ministry wanting to replace the Advocate-General who was an Englishman.

The Congress party thought this such an important issue that it did not want the Governor to interfere and with that end in view desired to amend the Constitution so that the Governor might become a constitutional head, the Ministry wielding all the powers. As immediate changes in the Constitution did not seem possible, the Congress sought to make up for it by insisting on an assurance from Governors that they would not use their special powers. On the issue of Advocate-General the British convention was there and that was why the Congress laid so much emphasis on it.

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Compromise between Tiller and Landlord

AFTER the Congress ministries were formed, the responsibility of assisting them, particularly the Bihar Ministry, devolved upon me. The first thing I had to grapple with was the land reform in Bihar. The work was taken in hand soon after the formation of the Ministry. The aim was to come to a settlement after consultation with all the parties concerned, without alienating either the zamindar or the tiller.

It might be recalled that, during the 1933-34 satyagraha, when the new Constitutional proposals were on the anvil, the Bihar Governor, wishing to sponsor a party not as radical as the Congress, which could develop into a serious rival to the Congress in the next elections, encouraged the zamindars of the province to set up an organisation called the United Party. To help secure the support of the kisans, it encouraged the zamindar members of the provincial legislative assembly to bring forward a Tenancy Amendment Bill which embodied a few concessions to the tenants. The farsighted among the zamindars, however, thought it would be in their own interest to keep the kisans contented and happy and so genuinely favoured tenancy reform. Several kisan workers who were considered leaders of the tenantry believed the zamindars' professions and joined the new party.

Swami Sahajanand, put new life into the old Kisan Sabha and organised an opposition to the Bill. His campaign, undertaken in the absence of the Congress workers who were behind prison bars, was so successful that the amendment bill was further amended, and passed, to the advantage of the kisans. When we came out of prison in 1934 we decided that the tenancy laws should be further amended in consultation with all the parties, because the new tenancy legislation, while granting certain facilities to the kisans, left many points unsettled. But any action by us had to await the elections. In 1937, when Bihar went to the polls, the United Party was routed by the Congress. The stage was then set for the introduction of the reforms.

When the Congress took over the reins, knowing that tenancy reform was bound to come and thinking that it would be better to have the question settled amicably, zamindars' representatives, on their own initiative, approached the Ministry and offered their help and co-operation in instituting tenancy laws to ameliorate the lot of the kisans and suggested negotiations. The Ministry welcomed the idea, and I agreed with it, as a settlement between the zamindars and the kisans would facilitate early legislation. With the overwhelming strength of the Congress in the Assembly, it would no doubt be beyond the power of the zamindars to prevent an ameliorative measure but they could certainly resort to dilatory tactics and delay the successful operation of the Act. They were rich and had resources and were capable of organising themselves, whereas the cultivators were incapable of joint action. Further the Congress was pledged to demonstrate that the new Constitution was unworkable and it was likely that after working for some time, the Ministers might have to leave office. Therefore, it would be better for the Ministry to accomplish whatever it could for the welfare of the people as soon as possible. In view of these considerations, the Ministry decided in favour of direct negotiations with the parties concerned, failing which to take appropriate measures itself. I approved of the plan and set afoot the negotiations, Maulana Azad and I, as members of the Congress Parliamentary Board, began parleys with representatives of zamindars and kisans in Patna.

Our talks continued for many days in Sadaqat Ashram, where I usually lived, because I was not quite well and my friends spared me the inconvenience of going elsewhere. We held discussions with the zamindars, then with the kisans and lastly with the Bihar Ministry so that a compromise agreement could be made the basis of the new legislation. Though we understood the problems of the kisans, who had always supported the Congress and reposed faith in it, and wanted to help in their solution, we would have liked it better if the kisans and zamindars had agreed to meet and decide for themselves. But there was not much hope of such talks succeeding unless we intervened. We felt that both parties would have to climb down to arrive at a settlement and the Congress should

act as a neutral party in the negotiations. We, therefore, explained at the outset to the zamindars that we were not negotiating on behalf of the kisans and that they would be free to accept whatever concessions we secured for them and to agitate later for whatever else they considered necessary. But the Government wanted to raise more revenue and for that purpose to raise a new tax, the brunt of which was to fall on the zamindars. We included this new tax in the purview of the agreement we expected to conclude with the zamindars.

First, we took up the question of reduction of rent payable by tenants. We wanted that everyone should be treated fairly and the conditions then obtaining in the province, where the rate of rent ranged from four annas to Rs. 25 per acre, should be changed. At some places the rent had been increased a little while earlier and at some others the mode of payment had been changed from kind to cash. But a general rule could not be applied as it might be beneficial to some and mean hardship for others. It might give relief to people who did not need it and create difficulties for those who were already suffering from an insufferable burden. Therefore, we dropped the idea of a uniform rent reduction. We estimated that an average reduction of four annas in the rupee would be feasible and after a lot of discussion we arrived at a formula by which relief was provided to areas where rent had gone up very high and left out areas where relief was not called for. In some cases, the reduction suggested went up to eight or ten annas in the rupee while no reduction was suggested in others. On the basis of our proposals, the average reduction worked out to four annas in the rupee.

The second question was the kisan's right to transfer his land. According to the Bengal Tenancy Law, which was applicable to Bihar also, the kisan, generally speaking, did not have the right. Thanks to the resourcefulness of lawyers and the decisions of judges, this law had become a confused web. A layman could hardly understand in what circumstances a kisan could sell or transfer a part or the whole of his land. There were no uniform decisions on these questions. Sometimes two judges disagreed and the matter had to come up before a full bench. With the passage of time, the question developed new subtleties. When Bihar separated from Bengal, the Patna

High Court developed views different from those of the Calcutta High Court. We wanted, therefore, to simplify this law so that ordinary people might be able to understand it all. Either the right of transfer could be fully recognised without any provisos or the right need not be recognised at all. While the kisan representatives demanded the full right of transfer, the zamindars opposed it saying that the land actually belonged to them and had been given to the kisans only to cultivate and that the kisan could sell or transfer his holding only if the landlord permitted it.

I was, and am still, of the view that an unconditional right to transfer land would only result in the smaller kisans losing their holdings and I am sure my view would be corroborated if an impartial body examined the question. But the kisans were keen on getting the right of transfer and in a way the zamindars themselves had conceded that right in the earlier Tenancy Amendment Act on condition that when a sale was effected they were given a share of the sale proceeds. We made the zamindars agree not only to having the transfer of holdings declared lawful but to the reduction and fixation of the " salami " or rate of commission they received from the tenants at the time of transfer.

Thirdly, we had to consider the question of arrears of rent. According to the existing law, the zamindar had the power to eject a tenant for arrears through a court decree and have the entire holding auctioned. The tenants complained that landlords took advantage of this provision and brought to sale the whole holding, even for small arrears. But the zamindars held that ejectment was a common remedy resorted to by them in case of non-payment of rent and asserted that it would be impossible to realise dues if some sort of control was not maintained over the tenants. They pointed to the United Provinces where ejectment was a common practice and said that the Bihar law was a much milder one. We, however, arrived at an agreement whereby only a part of a tenant's holding which was considered by the court sufficient to raise the amount due to the zamindar and not the whole holding should be brought to sale.

The fourth question was the system of payment of rent in kind, a system prevalent in the districts of Patna and Gaya,

the zamindar generally getting a fifty per cent. share of the produce. There were two different crop sharing systems in vogue. One was called *baoli batai,* under which the grain was divided when it was threshed, one half going to the landlord. The tenants complained that they were not permitted to cut and thresh the crop unless the zamindar's agent was present and, as the agent took his own time, the tenants were put to great hardship. Sometimes the zamindar would purposely delay sending the agent to attend the crop sharing in order to inconvenience tenants. If the tenants cut the crop in the absence of the zamindar, he would consider himself free to demand whatever amount of crop he chose, and oppressive zamindars took this opportunity to take drastic action against the tenants.

Under the second system, known as *danabandi*, the agent of the zamindar appraised the crop while it was still standing. The agent made an estimate of the crop by a ' sample survey ' — either merely guessing or actually reaping a small area of the field and, on this basis, fixing the zamindar's share for the entire field. The zamindar's share on the basis of this estimate was realised when the crop was cut and threshed. In this case, the tenants said that the appraisement was arbitrary and unjust.

Under provisions in the existing law, the tenant or the zamindar could get the rent commuted from kind to cash if either of them thought that the existing arrangement caused hardship to him, the court fixing the basis of the cash rent. After the First World War, as prices skyrocketed, many tenants had the rent commuted from kind to cash. Because of the increasing prices they were able to pay the rent by selling only a small fraction of their produce but, when the slump came in 1929-30, the market crashed and because of the reduced value of the crop they could no longer pay the commuted rent. This was one of the reasons why they demanded reduction of rent. After the negotiations, the zamindars were amenable to a reduction not only of the cash rent but also their share of crop.

These were the main amendments to the tenancy law on which a satisfactory settlement was reached among the zamindars, the kisans and the Government. On the question

of the agricultural income-tax also, all the details regarding the rate and exemptions were discussed with the zamindars and agreement arrived at. The new Bill was enacted within a few months of the agreement. The Government then appointed a number of special officers to implement the law by revising the records in respect of rents payable to landlords and the work had almost been completed by November 1939 when the Congress Ministry resigned. The agricultural income-tax law also had come into operation by then.

Because everything was done on the basis of mutual agreement and compromise, the tenants were able to reap the advantage of the new law almost immediately. Although sometimes the zamindars as well as the tenants had some small grievance and attacked the Government, on the whole, the Act was implemented without bitterness or acrimony. I feel that if the kisan leaders had acted more wisely and in greater concert with the Ministry, they might have gained even more.

There was one important matter on which no settlement could be reached and which caused some discontent among the kisans. The lands which the zamindars had purchased in auctions in execution of court decrees for the realisation of rent arrears had accumulated with the zamindars and they did not want to settle them on tenants for tilling, because under the law even a temporary settlement would have meant accrual of rights of tenancy of which the kisan could not be deprived. The zamindars either cultivated such land themselves or let it lie fallow. Though at first it was the smaller zamindars who kept these auctioned lands with themselves, the bigger zamindars also began adopting the same procedure when they wanted to go in for mechanised agriculture. The kisans resented this and the Government could not do anything to help them. At some places, the kisans resorted to satyagraha to compel zamindars to release such lands but the Government had to intervene. The trouble continued as long as the Ministry lasted and the kisans blamed not only the Government but also me for their plight.

The land reform, however, I should say, was a solid achievement which, perhaps, no other province could boast of. In the United Provinces, no similar agreement could be reached

with the zamindars and they opposed the Government's proposals at every stage. Although by the time the Congress Government resigned, the Tenancy Bill had been enacted, it was only later that it received the Governor's assent. In Orissa, the Bill could not be passed at all, while in Madras, before the Government could take action on an excellent report submitted by an inquiry committee, it was out of office and the report was shelved by the advisor regime. In Bengal, the non-Congress Ministry appointed a special committee which prepared a report but no action was ever taken on it.

The second mission I was entrusted with was in the United Provinces. Its Chief Minister, Pandit Pant, desired the condition of the factory workers of Kanpur to be investigated by an inquiry committee under my chairmanship. It was an important assignment and I said I was not qualified for it, because not having done much trade union work, I had no special knowledge of the factory workers' problems. Pandit Pant, on the other hand, thought that my limited knowledge itself would be an advantage as I would be able to take a detached, commonsense view of the problem and that I would be considered an impartial mediator both by the millowners and the workers. He further said that my appointment would please both the parties who would have confidence in me. That clinched the matter and, in spite of my reluctance, I had to accept the assignment.

Towards the close of the negotiations with the zamindars and the kisans, I fell ill. After a few days' rest in my village, I attended a meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Wardha and left for Kanpur. On the way I became seriously ill again from suspected food poisoning. In spite of this, after only a short respite, I started on my work in Kanpur. Only a few days' experience sufficed for us to come to the conclusion that it would be very difficult to arrive at a settlement if the committee attempted to carry both the workers and the millowners with it. The committee consisted, besides neutral persons, of representatives of both the parties and I felt that our work would have been easier had the members all been independent persons who would have had a freer hand, and not representatives of the contending groups. However, the main burden of drafting the report fell on three of us—

B. Shiva Rao, who had considerable experience of labour organisations in Madras, Prof. Rudra and me. In spite of my illness, I managed to finish my part of the job in Kanpur — recording of statements, cross-examination of witnesses and scrutiny of documents — but I could not go round to the mills to see the conditions of the workers. I left for Patna thinking that after a short rest I could devote my attention to the drafting of the report in consultation with the other members.

When I reached Patna, the Provincial Congress Committee was in session to discuss the compromise formula on tenancy laws, and I had to attend the meeting. After a heated discussion the Committee ratified the pact. I was already weak and the additional strain in Patna resulted in further deterioration of my health. In fact, I became unconscious twice while I was working. But I told no one of my condition and wanted to go away to Zeradei for rest after completing my work in Patna. At this time Anugrah Narain Sinha had been involved in a serious motor accident in which his companion, Parasnath Tripathi, had been killed and he and the driver had been admitted to hospital with serious injuries. I was very much upset and visited him in hospital. Then I took the steamer for Zeradei. Immediately after I boarded the vessel, I fell sick. It was with difficulty that I could take the train for Sonepur but Janardan, my nephew, who happened to be travelling by the same train, took charge of me.

I was constantly vomiting and I felt restless. I had to be carried in a *palki* from Bhatapokhar railway station to Zeradei, a distance of two miles.* At night my condition grew worse and word was sent to Patna. In the morning, doctors came from Siwan and Chapra and by the evening Dr. Bannerji and Dr. Saran had arrived from Patna. They suspected that I was still suffering from the effects of food poisoning. After a week's treatment in Zeradei, the doctors, finding that I was in a position to travel, had me transferred to Patna Hospital, where I improved gradually. Then I was taken to the same cottage in the hospital in which Anugrah Narain was being looked after. I was there for two months but for a few days neither of us could see the other because both of us were unable to

* The name of the station was subsequently changed to Zeradei.

move. When I began to get well I used to come dow
my room on the first floor and visit him in his room.
that he was surrounded by files and, while still lying
dictating instructions to his assistants. In fact, I hea
within only a few days of admission to hospital he had
working.

When I was a little better I completed the report on
labour. The millowners opposed its recommendation
workers also opposed certain features of the report. A
ensued and the conflict went on for a long time. I do no
how far the recommendations were implemented. I
not but regret that I had not been well enough to visit
before submitting my recommendations and to discuss
with both the parties. If I had been able to, perhaps
of them would have opposed the Government's m
implement my recommendations.

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Congress Ministerial Crisis

WHILE I was convalescing in the hospital, the Haripura session of the Congress was held in February, 1938. Meanwhile, a ministerial crisis was fast developing in all the provinces where the Congress held power. The Congress ministries had been in office for about eight months till then and were determined to release political prisoners, which was one of the promises made in the election manifesto. While the ministries were about to bring this issue to the Legislature, the political prisoners in the Andamans went on hunger-strike. With great difficulty, the Government of India was persuaded to transfer these prisoners to their respective provinces. When the prisoners came back to their respective provinces the Congress Governments decided to release them but the Governors refused to agree. The matter came to a head in all the provinces. Maulana Azad came to Patna and met me in hospital to discuss the issue. He then met Sardar Patel and Gandhiji. After a long discussion it was decided that the Congress Governments should press their demands, failing which they should tender their resignations. In the U.P. and Bihar, the ministries tried their best to persuade the Governors to accept their demands but could not succeed. Consequently, a few days before the Haripura session, the two ministries submitted their resignations. The Governors refused to accept them and asked the ministries to carry on till alternative arrangements were made. All the Bihar Ministers except Anugrah Narain Sinha, who, along with me was still convalescing in hospital, left for Haripura.

The resignations were a test case because this was the first occasion when the Governors used their special powers, although they had given an assurance not to use them at all. The whole country and the British Government were convinced that the Congress Ministries would stick to their decision. In Haripura there was an atmosphere of tension and expectancy. The fears of the critics, who had argued that, ensnared by the lure of power, the Congress Ministries would

forget their commitments and stick to office, were belied. During the session, we heard the news that the British Government had relented and agreed to release the prisoners.

There was unprecedented enthusiasm at the Congress session, which was presided over by Subhas Chandra Bose. The arrangements made in Haripura were most elaborate, involving heavy expenditure. By the time the people returned home from Haripura, the Ministries had withdrawn their resignations. The Ministers returned to their provinces with redoubled enthusiasm and a determination to speed up the many important measures which they had just initiated, as there was no knowing when and for what reasons they may again be required to quit office. They wanted to introduce some tangible reforms before any such emergency arose.

After the withdrawal of its resignation, the Bihar Government appointed a committee to inquire into the conditions of factory workers in the province under my chairmanship. Having just completed the Kanpur inquiry committee work, I was free to take up the new assignment. The Bihar assignment was more difficult than my work in the U.P. since the latter related only to the conditions in factories in one town, Kanpur, whereas in Bihar the terms of reference of the inquiry committee covered labour of all kinds in the province and Bihar, as is well known, is a province in which factories of all kinds exist. It leads India in mining, producing more coal, mica, steel and copper than all the other provinces put together. The Tata Iron & Steel Company of Jamshedpur is the biggest factory in Asia. Besides this, there are other factories in Jamshedpur, manufacturing wire, cable, tools and agricultural implements. Bihar is one of the leading producers of sugarcane and, after U.P., it has the largest number of sugar factories in India. Another commodity in which the province leads is shellac, Chota Nagpur being the leading producer in the country. Shellac factories are located in Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas. Here and there one would find a few jute and cotton textile mills.

The living and working conditions of labour differed greatly in the different industries. In Jamshedpur, the workers lived in a big modern town where the factories worked round the clock. Many workers of the sugar factories continued to live

in the villages and came to work in the factories only for a few months. Conditions differed in the mines also. While in Jharia, where most of the coal mines are concentrated, the miners lived in a colony close to the mines; in the mica mines, which are scattered in the forests and distant ridges, the workers lived in scattered tenements, far separated from each other. While in Jharia, filtered water supply was available for the miners, in the mica mines, no such provision existed nor was it possible. The inquiry committee had to look into these different conditions of the workers and suggest improvements. I was impressed by the immensity of the problem and I made up my mind to apply myself vigorously to it.

The problem of the sugarcane cultivator was one of the other pressing questions which the Bihar Government had to tackle. Formerly, the cultivators used to grow only so much of cane as they could convert into *gur* (jaggery) with the help of their bullock-worked crushers. With the coming of the sugar factories, the cultivators were relieved of the work of crushing cane and making jaggery. With the mills buying large quantities of sugarcane, the cultivators found it profitable to utilise a large portion of their land for growing the cash crop and, after their harvest, to drive their bullock carts laden with sugarcane to the nearest mill. But they were at the mercy of the millowner. If he refused to buy their sugarcane, the cultivators were ruined for the year. Such a situation arose in 1934 when many sugar mills were damaged in the earthquake and the Government and the Earthquake Relief Committee had to come to the aid of the cultivators and provide them with indigenous crushers. The millowners generally bought the sugarcane at a stipulated price but sometimes they reduced the price arbitrarily and the cultivators were helpless. Therefore, the Government, long before the Congress took over, assumed statutory authority to fix the price and made it illegal for any millowner to buy sugarcane at a price lower than that announced. A minimum price was thus guaranteed to the cultivators who managed to get even more in case of higher demand and competition between mills.

When the sugarcane crop was below the average in 1936, there was keen competition among the mills for the purchase of the commodity. The prices went up and the kisans made a

huge profit despite the poor harvest. They brought more land under the sugarcane crop the next year, with the result that there was more sugarcane in 1937 than the mills could buy: the prices fell and the kisans were ruined. This happened just when the Yunus Ministry came into power in April and the new Ministry did nothing to alleviate the distress of the peasants. But the Congress tried to persuade the mills to buy all the sugarcane and some of them agreed and bought all the sugarcane from their respective areas. When the Congress formed the Government in July 1937, it wanted to take some effective action so that the 1936 crisis in the sugar industry was not repeated. I had talks with Dr. Syed Mahmud, the Minister in charge, and we decided that since the U.P. and Bihar were the biggest sugarcane producers, joint action should be taken by the two Governments. Accordingly, the question was mooted with the U.P. Government and a joint conference was called, in which I also participated.

The conference not only fixed the minimum cane price but also the sugar price. The millowners, after some opposition, agreed to it. They then organised themselves into a syndicate which was recognised by the Government. Mills, not members of the syndicate, were denied licence to crush sugarcane. The cultivators got a fair deal from then on but I thought that if we drove the millowners too hard, they might go down, unable to stand the competition with the mills in other provinces, over which we had no control. I wanted, therefore, that joint deliberations by all provincial Governments be held to solve the problem, but the Central Government was unwilling to take any action. We tried to take the matter up with individual Governments, but none of them, including Congress Governments, were ready to fall in line with the U.P. and Bihar. The result was that the millowners in other provinces, especially in the Princely States, with no governmental controls to restrain them, got an unfair advantage over the Bihar and U.P. millowners and gained a large profit. Attracted by this, a few millowners closed down their factories in Bihar and set up new ones in other provinces. Despite all this, however, the kisans in Bihar got a better deal than before and continued to enjoy the benefits as long as the Congress Ministry lasted.

Dr. Mahmud was in charge of the Ministry of Education and he wanted to nominate me to the Patna University Senate from which I had resigned in 1921. Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, the Vice-Chancellor, also insisted on my acceptance and I had to agree. After I joined the Senate I moved a resolution suggesting the appointment of a committee to draw up a plan for an improved system of education, from the primary to higher stages. Notwithstanding the criticism of teachers, the resolution was passed unanimously. I was ill at the time but managed to be present at the meeting, though a friend had to read out the resolution on my behalf. After the approval of the Government, a committee was set up to which I was appointed a member and Prof. K. T. Shah of Bombay, chairman.

Just before the resolution came up in the Senate, Mahatma Gandhi had written a thought-provoking article on the reform of the educational system in his weekly *Harijan*. The main feature of the plan he enunciated was that education should be imparted to children through handicrafts and not through the printed word. He had indicated that what the children earned through handicrafts would go to meet the expenses of their primary education. His plan served a dual purpose; the reform of the existing system and the provision of funds for the spread of education, relieving the burden on the Government exchequer. This would facilitate the spread of free and compulsory education which had been the demand of the public since the days of Gokhale and would overcome the paucity of funds which had always been the reason for Government's inaction. The experiment had been tried at a few places in British India but it was done on such a small scale that it gave no indication whether it would be workable on a larger scale throughout the country. For example, some years ago a free education scheme was introduced in Chapra district by the joint efforts of my brother and the then Inspector of Schools and, despite the Government's disinterestedness, the scheme was somehow successful.

Gandhiji's plan created a great stir in the educational world. He convened a conference of experienced educationists at Wardha to consider his proposal. Under Dr. Zakir Husain's chairmanship, a sub-committee was appointed to prepare a

plan which later came to be known as the Wardha Plan of Education. The report of the sub-committee supported Gandhiji's ideas in a large measure except for the earn-as-you-learn scheme for children with which it did not wholly agree. On the other hand, many educational experts supported this scheme, citing in support the views of European and American experts. It appeared that what Gandhiji had thought out independently tallied with the views of modern educationists. It was the Wardha System which I had in mind when I moved my resolution in the Senate.

The Bihar Government appointed another committee to help compile a dictionary of simple words of Arabic and Persian origin which might be intelligible to people knowing Hindi as well as Urdu so that authors could be encouraged to use only those words in textbooks. In view of some opinions expressed by me at the Nagpur session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in 1936, Dr. Mahmud felt that I should be the chairman of the committee. But I was preoccupied with several other things and as I also felt that I would be unable to do justice to such a difficult job, I declined the offer but I accepted membership of the committee. Maulana Azad was appointed chairman. I had thus taken on myself a lot of responsibility in my province. In addition to this, I was a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the Congress Working Committee to which important questions of policy were referred to by Congress Governments for decision.

Then there was the problem of recurring floods which came up before us but which we were unable to tackle. Between Chapra and Patna, there are as many as four rivers, the Sarju, Ganga, Sone and Gandak, all joining together till they become one larger river. When there is a huge downpour either at the source or along the courses of these rivers, the water overflows the banks flooding vast areas in North Bihar. Though there had always been floods in Bihar, the problem had assumed a serious form since the earthquake. It was feared that the beds of the rivers might have been lifted by the earthquake so that they were no longer able to carry the large volume of water they used to carry before. Further, the lack of a sufficient number of culverts and waterways on the railway tracks, preventing the free flow of flood water,

aggravated the trouble. The Railway authorities never listened to the complaints of the public. There were some embankments constructed specially to control the floods, but their utility was a matter for dispute. I had written several articles on the subject of the floods before and when the Congress Ministry came into office they took up the question. The Ministry called a conference of engineers and representatives of the public to consider the problem. Nothing came out of it as none of the participants had common views on the cause of the floods or the means to prevent them. I could not attend the conference owing to illness but my views came up for discussion.

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Gandhi Sevak Sangh

After I left hospital about the end of March 1938 my first public engagement was participation in the annual session of the Gandhi Sevak Sangh, which was held in the village of Delang, near Puri, in Orissa. I went along with my wife, my sister and my brother's wife. Gandhiji and Sardar Patel also attended the session. We had four or five meetings at which organisational matters and questions relating to principles underlying our programme were discussed at great length. In the evenings there were joint spinning and lectures in which the public participated. The field workers of the Sevak Sangh were provided by this annual conference with an opportunity of living with Gandhiji for a few days and discussing matters of basic importance and hearing his views at first hand.

The members of the Sangh were devoted to carrying out the constructive programme of the Congress, *e.g.* promotion of spinning and khadi, service of Harijans, revival of village industries and propagation of basic education. Some occupied themselves with the work of cattle improvement, which also included the skinning of dead cattle, preparing of hides and making of articles like shoes out of them. A few looked after the organisational work of the Congress but then they were expected to emphasise the importance of constructive work.

When the Assembly elections were approaching some members wanted to contest the elections and two special conferences had to be called to decide their cases. Some were permitted to stand for election. In Bihar, two of its members, Jaglal Choudhury and Krishna Ballabh Sahay, became Minister and Parliamentary Secretary respectively. They had taken a vow before the elections that they would be satisfied with the living allowance they received from the Sangh. Their allowances were stopped when they began getting salaries and they rendered a full account of their salaries and expenses to the Sangh.

The Sangh generally never participated in political work. No one ever normally took part in the municipal, district

board or assembly elections. If a member ever sought to contest and was elected it was done purely because of his personal service, not because of his membership of the Sangh. The Sangh had on its membership roll men like Jamnalal Bajaj, Sardar Patel and me, who were members of the Congress Working Committee and foremost workers of the Congress in their respective provinces. Gandhiji was not a member but was the guide of the Sangh.

Allegations have been made that the Sangh was part of the Congress organisation, a sort of splinter group like the Swarajya Party or the Socialist Party. Nothing was farther from the truth. The Sangh's only object was to prepare workers interested in furthering the constructive programme. Its members were expected to follow Gandhian teachings in their own lives and propagate them to the best of their ability. The membership of the Sangh could lift one morally if one acted honestly and truly. The lives of some of the members would bear out my statement and can be the ideal for all of us. Unfortunately, the Sangh was disbanded after its Bengal session some time before the Ramgarh Congress.

During our stay in Orissa, a group in the provincial Congress led by Pandit Nilakanth Das and Godavari Misra brought some complaints against the Ministry. Sardar Patel and I, members of the Parliamentary Committee, thought that we should settle the long-standing dispute once and for all. We heard both the sides and gave our verdict. We entrusted the organisational work to Gopabandhu Das, a member of the Sevak Sangh, who did not belong to any group and had been doing constructive work. But, unfortunately, the matter did not end here and was to come before us again later.

During the Gandhi Sevak Sangh conference some Sangh workers, accompanied by members of my family, visited the Jagannath temple in Puri. When Gandhiji came to know of it he was very much pained because that temple had not opened its doors to Harijans. Gandhiji never visited any temple which was closed to Harijans since, he said, caste Hindus had no right to worship in a temple which did not allow entry to Harijans. Some of the workers and even some of those who considered themselves Gandhiji's followers felt that the Mahatma was being too harsh. But this little incident only serves to show the

depth of Gandhiji's feelings on the question of temple entry and his love for the Harijans.

When I was discharged from the Patna Hospital I was asked to take a short rest by the doctors and I selected Nasik, where the Birlas have a house which is used as a health resort. G. D. Birla kindly made arrangements for my stay there. I preferred Nasik for another reason; the A.-I.C.C. was to hold its session in Bombay in May and it would be easier for me to go there from Nasik.

Before I left for Nasik I was asked by the Bihar Government to draw up a scheme for village uplift. They had a separate department for it and wanted me to suggest a suitable person to manage it. So far Governments had done little for the uplift of the villagers. Officials thought of themselves as masters of the people. A band of workers wedded to the service of the rural people was what we required. I formulated a plan and chose Prajapati Mishra to head the department. People with practical experience of working in rural areas were selected to assist him. If Congressmen were chosen it was not because we wanted to find jobs for them but because they alone had experience of this kind of work. They were commissioned to train others for the work. The final touches to the plan were given only after I had gone to Nasik where Prajapati Mishra came to consult me. The department did great service to the people as long as the Congress Ministry was in office but after its exit, the attitude of the department changed and very soon afterwards it was disbanded altogether.

During my visit to Nasik, Chakradhar Saran, who acted as my secretary, could not accompany me and his place was taken by Ambika Kant Sinha. I had an interesting gentleman for a companion, Daivarat Brahmachari, of Gokarna in Karnatak. I had met him first at a conference in Muzaffarpur where he had read an address to me. I came to know him more intimately when he visited Sadaqat Ashram with some friends. Impressed by his Sanskrit scholarship, I invited him to Zeradei where we spent some time together. When I went to Nasik I asked him to give me the pleasure of his company again and he readily agreed.

Brahmachari was so well-read in the ancient lore that he could recite the Vedas and the Upanishads from memory.

I learnt from him that the practice of committing the Vedas and Upanishads to memory was still prevalent among Brahmins in his region. They go on reciting them even while engaged in agricultural operations or other work. At the time he came to Nasik he was busy preparing a chart depicting the origin and evolution of the earth, with the help of the relevant stanzas from the Vedas. It spoke volumes for his scholarship that he could undertake to do this arduous task without the help of a single reference work. He had also lived with the great savant, Raman Maharishi in Tiruvannamalai. He was a disciple of Ganapati Shastri, a great scholar and a constant companion of the Maharishi, and it was through him that Brahmachari had been introduced to the great man. In the biography of the savant, Brahmachari is referred to in affectionate terms and his intellectual attainments are praised. When he came on a tour to the north, he learned Hindi quickly and could speak so well that he could easily be mistaken for a northerner. Now he is looking after a school and *goshala* in Gokarna.

We had a fine time together in Nasik. We used to discuss the Upanishads and the Vedas during the day and in the evening go walking or visiting the nearby areas. We went on a pilgrimage to Trimbak, the source of the Godavari. Unable to ascend the hills on foot, I made the trip in a chair. We saw several ancient caves near Trimbak with relics of the art of the olden times. We visited the Government Security Press in Nasik, where currency notes, postal stamps and court papers are printed. An Englishman, an army officer disabled during the First World War, who was the Press Master, took us round. My friend Brahmachari from Karnatak was also a yogi and he told me that if I did some regular yogic exercises I would get rid of my asthma. He initiated me into some of the exercises but I could not continue them because I had to leave for Bombay and there I was again taken ill.

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The Sad Affairs of the C.P. Ministry

THE Bombay meeting of the A.-I.C.C. in May was the first to be held after the Haripura Congress. Though I made the trip from Nasik to Bombay I could not participate in the deliberations owing to illness. The most momentous decision taken at the session was the appointment of a Planning Committee to draw up a plan for the development of the country. Jawaharlal was appointed its chairman and Prof. K. T. Shah, secretary. The committee split into several sub-committees for purposes of drafting the several sections of the plan. All the provincial Governments extended full co-operation to the Committee in its work. Its report was almost ready when the struggle with the British Government started again and it could not then be published.

I developed broncho-pneumonia while staying in Birla House, and my host did his best to alleviate my sufferings. A number of Jewish doctors who had fled from Germany during Hitler's regime had started practising in Bombay then. One of them used to visit Birla House. During my illness he started attending on me. The Bombay doctors, when they came to know of this, felt slighted and complained that a German doctor had been preferred to local doctors. When we heard this, we called these doctors to take up my treatment. One of them, Dr. M. D. D. Gilder, who was a minister in the Bombay Government, began to treat me. But it had no effect and on Gandhiji's advice I left for Wardha with him. The change brought no improvement in my health. I wrote to Dr. Bannerji and Dr. Saran to come to Wardha. Only Bannerji was able to come and he was accompanied by Dr. Damodar Prasad. Their treatment had an immediate effect and I started improving.

In Bombay I came to know of the sad affairs of the Central Provinces Ministry. The Ministry was riven with dissensions and the Parliamentary Committee decided to inquire into the matter. Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad went to Pachmarhi, the seat of Government in summer but, being laid up, I could

not accompany them. The main differences in the Ministry were between Dr. N. B. Khare, Chief Minister, and another Minister, D. P. Mishra. Before the formation of the Congress Ministry there were two groups in the Hindi-speaking region of the province, led by D. P. Mishra and Ravi Shankar Shukla respectively. No one could be elected leader of the Congress Party without the full support of the Hindi-speaking members.

Just on the eve of the elections to the assembly, Mishra was involved in a case and he resigned from all positions in the Congress till he could be cleared of all charges by the court. After the elections, Dr. Khare was elected leader mainly with the backing of D. P. Mishra. Then, by the time Dr. Khare was invited by the Governor to form a Government, the case against Mishra had been dropped by the authorities who considered the allegations baseless. Khare included Mishra in his Cabinet as well as Shukla, the other Hindi group leader. While Khare and Mishra were great friends, the Hindi group leaders(Mishra and Shukla) were considered rivals. But after the formation of the Government, Shukla and Mishra found common ground and came closer and closer together, while a cleavage appeared between Shukla and Mishra on the one hand and Dr. Khare on the other. Khare began complaining against Mishra and Mishra piled charges against Khare.

*Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad looked into their com-*plaints at Pachmarhi. They made some settlement and it was agreed on both sides that the two men would pull together. But the compromise was short-lived and the matter came to a head soon. Dr. Khare was so much opposed to Mishra that he began to manoeuvre the exclusion of Mishra from the Cabinet. Meanwhile, Mishra and Shukla became very great friends. Ultimately, it was learnt that Dr. Khare was intending to throw both of them out of the Cabinet. All efforts to avert a crisis failed and the Parliamentary Committee and the Working Committee decided to meet in Wardha. I was in Wardha then. I heard that on the eve of the Committees' meetings Dr. Khare was trying to seek the help of the Governor to reshuffle his Ministry. On the night before the Working Committee meeting, I wrote a letter to Khare asking him to desist but, the same night, before the letter could reach him,

Khare submitted his Ministry's resignation and when the Governor accepted it and invited him to form another Government, he formed one excluding both Mishra and Shukla. This was done so clandestinely that even I, who was close to Khare, knew of it only after the Ministry had been reshuffled.

When the Working Committee and the Parliamentary Committee met in Wardha the next morning, they were faced with a *fait accompli*. The Parliamentary Committee strongly resented Khare's action and called for an explanation from both the parties. Meanwhile the Congress President, Subhas Bose, also arrived, and the disputants were asked to explain their case to him. The Parliamentary Committee were of the firm view that the formation of a new Ministry when a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee and the Working Committee was about to take place was most derogatory. The newly appointed Ministers were asked to resign forthwith. The discussions had gone on till late in the night and when the decision was taken, Dr. Khare spoke to the Governor on the telephone the same night and informed him of his decision to resign. The next morning he submitted his as well as his colleagues' resignations. A meeting of the Central Provinces Congress Legislature Party was called in Wardha to select a new leader. Dr. Khare did not attend the meeting and Shukla was elected leader. When Shukla formed the new Government he included Mishra in it and left out Khare.

The placid political waters of the Central Provinces were stirred after these events. Dr. Khare reacted violently to the turn of events and denounced the Parliamentary Committee and even Gandhiji. The matter took a Marathi versus non-Marathi turn since Khare is a Maharashtrian Brahmin while Shukla, as also Mishra, were Hindi-speaking Kanya Kubja Brahmins of the U.P. For some time, the Congress was faced with disruption. Somebody circulated a printed booklet in which Khare's action was defended and the Parliamentary Committee condemned. Subhas Bose, who was staying in Wardha, then went to Nagpur and rebutted these allegations in a detailed statement which was printed and circulated at the time of the A.-I.C.C. meeting in Nagpur. The A.-I.C.C., after consideration of all the aspects of the matter, expelled Dr. Khare from the party.

I had been quite intimate with Dr. Khare and our friendship went back to 1934 when he was a staunch supporter of the Congress and opposed Dr. Moonje in the election to the Central Assembly. After Abhayankar's death he had come to be known as the leader of the Marathi-speaking area of the Central Provinces. He had had good relations with all. During the Assembly elections, the Parliamentary Committee used to consult him for everything, and at the time of formation of the Ministry, he was naturally considered leader. The Parliamentary Committee had full confidence in him. When, as Congress President, I toured the Central Provinces he accompanied me throughout the trip. It was, therefore, strange that he should have acted in this manner now. That an able man like him should thus become an opponent of the Congress was indeed very distressing. Since his ejection, he thought it his duty to discredit the Congress on every occasion. He issued statements and said things about the Congress which even its worst detractors might have hesitated to utter. The action we had taken was only to safeguard the discipline and reputation of the Congress.

At this time there seemed to be some prospects of forming a Congress Ministry in Assam where an assorted group of non-Congress elements had formed a Government. In the Assam Assembly, besides Hindus and Muslims, the number of Europeans and tribal representatives was fairly high. In non-Muslim constituencies, the Congress had fared very well and had come out of the elections as the biggest single party in the Assembly. But it did not command a majority and in April 1937 the non-Congress elements combined to form a ministry. It continued its artificial and precarious existence for over a year and towards the end of 1938 some members of the Ministerial Party crossed the floor and it was felt that the chances of forming a Congress Government were bright. The Assam Congress Legislature Party consulted the Parliamentary Committee.

The Congress President himself, accompanied by Maulana Azad, visited Assam. After talks in Shillong, Subhas Bose was strongly in favour of forming a ministry, but Maulana Azad opposed the idea. They consulted Sardar Patel and me over the phone. I was of the same view as Maulana Azad.

I felt that in provinces where the Congress was not in a clear majority it could not work effectively as the ruling party, because it would have to depend for its support in every major decision on other groups. On the strength of their number in Orissa, the Congress could prevent the appointment of Sir John Dain as Governor. It was doubtful if the proposed Assam Ministry could act in a similar way in important matters. The ministry would only be able to carry on day-to-day work and would not be able to carry out the Congress policies embodied in its manifesto. I said that the Congress could form Governments only on some principles and not just fill ministerial posts. But Subhas Bose asserted that the Congress Legislature Party would be able to improve its strength once it accepted office. Sardar Patel also supported his view and the approval of the Congress High Command was given to the formation of the Congress Ministry. The new Ministry took over soon afterwards.

As indicated above, in Orissa Dain was a senior civilian officer. When the Governor of Orissa was to proceed on leave, Dain was appointed to officiate in his place for a few months. The Congress Ministry objected to it. The ground was that an officer, working under the Ministry, if elevated to a Governor's post wherefrom he may revert after a few months would present administrative embarrassment. It is not proper to elevate a subordinate over the Ministry for a short period like this. If this practice were to be introduced, the Ministry may not find it easy to control civilians under them. The Ministry threatened to resign if Dain was made officiating Governor. At that time, the Governor of Orissa did not proceed on leave. Thereafter in whatever Province, when the Governor went on leave, the senior civilian of that Province was not given a chance of officiating.

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Before and after Tripuri Congress

THE A.-I.C.C. session had concluded but the Working Committee members were still in Nagpur when we heard the news that Hitler was threatening to strike at Czechoslovakia and that Chamberlain had gone to Munich to meet Hitler. We feared that a failure of Chamberlain's mission might precipitate a war between Britain and Germany. The Working Committee stayed on to consider what attitude the Congress should take in the event of a war in Europe. The question was how could the Congress, wedded to non-violence, help anybody in a war when it could not commit any violent action. At the same time we had to think of the fact that the Congress Governments had not been able to carry on the administration purely on the principle of *ahimsa*. They had sometimes resorted to firing to quell riots. The police and the jails were intact. The Congress had no control over the central administration but it had never opposed the maintenance of an army on ideological grounds. If a war broke out, the Congress might be dragged into the conflict.

In a study of these questions, Gandhiji's advice was available to us. Unfortunately, we could not know the views of Jawaharlal who happened to be on a visit to Europe at the time. When the Working Committee wanted to prepare a directive to the Congress Governments, we found that not all the members thought alike. We could not gauge the mind of the President and could not guess what directive he proposed to issue. While in this quandary, came the welcome news that Britain and France had arrived at an understanding with Hitler and that war had been averted.

The election of Congress delegates and members of the A.-I.C.C. was approaching when we had to think of nominating the President for the next Congress session to be held in Tripuri near Jabalpur in March 1939. Many favoured Maulana Azad while some seemed to prefer giving a second term to Subhas Bose. It appeared that Subhas Bose himself was seeking re-election but he never spoke his mind to the

Working Committee. He had been elected unanimously for the Haripura session at the instance of Gandhiji himself. Even now, if he had expressed his wish to Gandhiji and all of us, we might have somehow accommodated him. But he and his supporters did not deem it necessary and a rift appeared in the Congress.

When the Working Committee next met in Bardoli, where Gandhiji used to spend a month in winter, we informally discussed the issue again and it was generally agreed among us that Maulana Azad should be elected. Maulana Azad consented but no one spoke of this to Subhas Bose. He also never touched on the subject but we only heard that wherever he went he had been canvassing support for his own candidature. Later, Maulana Azad changed his mind and told Gandhiji. I was in Patna when I received a telegram from Sardar Patel that it had been proposed to nominate Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and that I should join in signing a statement supporting him. His nomination was approved by us. The contest, therefore, was to be between Subhas Bose and Sitaramayya.

Usually we put up a few names for presidentship out of which one was elected, but there had been no keen contest for several years. The provincial Congress committees somehow seemed to sense who would be the candidate who would receive the support of the majority and such a person was nominated and usually elected unanimously. But this time the election promised to be marked out from the rest. A keen contest between those who believed in Gandhiji's ideology and those who did not seemed to be in the offing. Although Gandhiji had retired from the Congress, his advice was sought in almost all matters of importance. Whenever we were in difficulties it was natural for us to approach him and he solved them for us. It appeared now that things might change and that a new Congress President might come in who would formulate his own programme and carry the organisation with him. Though such thoughts as these were on the minds of many, none spoke about it in public. Gandhiji kept silent and never issued any statement about the election. If Maulana Azad had agreed to stand, we had no doubt that he would have been returned by a large majority because the common

Congressman liked him and did not want to break with the Gandhian programme. But the people were unable to see a symbol of Gandhiji in Sitaramayya, and so in the election which ensued, Subhas Bose won by a large majority.

On the eve of the Working Committee meeting which was to be held in Wardha to prepare the draft resolutions for the Subject Committee, most of the members sent in their resignations. We did not see eye to eye with the President and we thought it better to let Bose himself draft the resolutions because the main burden of the Congress organisation would have to be borne by him and his supporters in future. Further, we did not want to embarrass him by our presence in the Working Committee. It would have looked improper also if we, as the Working Committee, were to oppose the official resolutions in the open session. So we wanted to give Bose a free hand and wanted him to constitute his own Working Committee and to draft resolutions he and his supporters wanted to sponsor. We thought our stand was in keeping with democratic principles. At the time of the Working Committee meeting we, the members, went to Wardha. Subhas Bose did not come as he had been taken ill and so no action had been taken about our resignations. We could have drafted the resolutions to be placed before the Subjects Committee in Bose's absence but, thinking it improper to do this, we postponed the Working Committee meeting till the Tripuri session.

Gandhiji was unable to attend the Tripuri session because he had at that time gone on fast in Rajkot in protest against the State authorities' breach of agreement with the people. There had been conflicts between the people and the rulers of the Kathiawad States for some time. The Congress did not interfere in the Princely States as a matter of policy, but individual Congressmen took interest in the activities of States peoples. Jawaharlal Nehru and Pattabhi Sitaramayya had been Presidents of the States People's Conference. Similarly, Sardar Patel had intervened in the dispute of the people of Rajkot State, in Kathiawad, against their ruler. A settlement had at last been reached, which the Mahatma also supported. Later, the Ruler and the administration of the State went back on the terms of the agreement. Pained

at the turn of events, Gandhiji went to Rajkot to persuade the authorities to implement the agreement. When he failed, he went on an indefinite fast.

An atmosphere of tension and indecision prevailed in Tripuri. The presidential election showed up a fissure in the organisation and threatened a deepening rift. Bose's supporters were angered by the resignation of the Working Committee and alleged that we had resigned just to place obstacles in their way. We argued that, on the other hand, they should welcome our resignation and take over the responsibility of formulating the Congress policy and programme if they really carried the majority with them as seemed to appear from the presidential election. It would be difficult for us to work with them because of our difference of outlook on many issues. If there were no differences, they should not have supported Subhas Bose's candidature. If they were doubtful that the majority was really with them and that votes had been cast for them through ignorance or any other reason, then the election was meaningless and a farce. Our resignation was meant to clarify our position and to avoid a situation in which the programme would be theirs and the responsibility of implementing it would be ours. But because of the President's illness our resignation could not be accepted and the Working Committee was still intact at the time of the Tripuri session.

With the Congress workers divided among themselves, there was confusion and conflict before and during the session. The Reception Committee, however, had made large-scale arrangements for the President's reception and delegates' convenience. For the President's procession, elephants, as many as was the age of the Congress, had been brought from the neighbouring Princely States. A separate Presidential camp, which could accommodate a large number, had been set up. The Working Committee had another camp and the delegates had different provincial camps, which became centres of heated controversy.

The President-elect being in bed and the internal differences holding sway, the Working Committee could not hold a formal meeting. We again tried to see that the President appointed another Working Committee so that we could attend the session as independent delegates. But we failed. We were

unable to fathom the programme he had in mind but what little we were aware of was not acceptable to us. The Working Committee, in these circumstances, prepared a resolution surveying the situation and stating that the President was free to nominate his own Working Committee and to have his programme approved by the Congress. Alternatively, we said, he should set up a Working Committee and formulate a programme in consultation with Gandhiji. Subhas Bose did not want to do either of these things, because he seemed to realise that although he had been elected by a majority of votes, the chances of getting his programme approved in open session were very remote. The only course open to him was either to accept Gandhiji's programme or resign the presidentship. He wanted to do neither but desired us to shoulder the responsibility for his programme. Some of us had talks with him but they made no headway. Eventually, we decided to place our resolution before the Subjects Committee.

Somehow, the ailing President was brought to the Subjects Committee meeting. He lay on the dais attended by his mother and some girls of his family. His brother, Dr. Sunil Bose and other medical men also stood by. He made a short speech, clarifying his views. We moved our resolution which was adopted by a majority of votes. At the meeting it became clear that Bose would not command a majority in the Subjects Committee, which consists of the A.-I.C.C. members, and that he would have to work in tune with their ideas till elections were held and another A.-I.C.C. was formed. But as for the open session, though we felt that the majority of the delegates would support us, we could not be sure until the session was held. In the open session two resolutions were to be moved, one by the President and the other on our behalf.

The open session commenced in an atmosphere of suspense. When the President-elect, who was known by all to be in ill health, did not turn up for a long time, Maulana Azad was asked to deputise for him. Someone read the President's address. At the outset, the introduction of the resolution in the absence of the President was opposed, but it did not seem proper to postpone the session to which people had come from all over the country. Maulana Azad ruled that the resolutions be moved and discussion held the next day when it was

expected that Subhas Bose would be able to participate in the meeting. Suddenly some persons started shouting. Their number was not large, but it is easy for a small number to disturb a big meeting. Jawaharlal Nehru went to one side of the dais and appealed to the audience to maintain silence, but to no avail. The shouting became louder and came nearer and nearer the dais. Jawaharlal went on appealing to the assemblage of 50,000 people to help keep order. Most of the people responded and as the disturbing elements who were a small number approached the dais, it was easy to mark them out from the rest. Eventually, they quietened down and the day's programme was successfully gone through.

The resolutions were moved, but discussion and voting were postponed to the following day. It appeared that the delegates and the visitors were ill at ease on account of the disturbance. The efforts of these men who had tried to win the sympathies of the audience had acted like a boomerang and damaged their own cause. The next day the open session was held in the tent of the Subjects Committee instead of the main pandal and only the delegates were allowed entry in order to facilitate counting of votes. Discussion took place on the two resolutions and, when a vote was taken, our resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority. Thereafter uncontroversial resolutions were moved and adopted, and there the session ended.

Acrimony and bitterness only increased after the session. We had failed to decide any major issue, only an internal quarrel had been fought in the open. The President's resolution had been thrown out and a resolution which did not have his support had been passed. What next? was the question now. If the President stood by the resolution adopted, he would have to form a Working Committee with the concurrence of Gandhiji. As Subhas's illness continued, no announcement of the personnel of the Working Committee was made at the conclusion of the session as was the custom.

Bose appeared to be in no mood to implement the Congress resolution. His state of health would not permit us to discuss these matters with him. I met him at Jhamadu Colliery, near Jharia, where he was convalescing under the care of his brother, but did not touch on Congress matters at all. Congress affairs were in the doldrums. Then Bose convened a meeting of the

A.-I.C.C. in Calcutta. Gandhiji visited Calcutta at the time but he did not attend the meeting and stayed at Sodepur while we were in the city.

The first day's meeting, which was not attended by Bose, concluded without transacting any special business but it became clear beyond all doubt that the Congress President did not enjoy the confidence of the A.-I.C.C. When coming out of the pandal, Pandit Pant, who moved our resolution at Tripuri, and Bhulabhai Desai were roughly handled by supporters of the other group, and Acharya Kripalani also was surrounded by men who threatened him with violence. As news of this incident spread in the city, people became enraged at the attack on the leaders and the atmosphere became tense. A disturbance was feared at the meeting the next day, and Jawaharlal Nehru went about pacifying people and prevented the situation from getting out of hand.

As Subhas Bose's position was now untenable, we began to think of his successor. The brutal frankness of Sardar Patel was not liked by Bose and other people. Jawaharlal, who was disgusted with the state of affairs, did not want to take up the Presidentship. Maulana Azad, who would have been the best choice, had an accident at the Allahabad railway station and fractured his foot and so could not be burdened with heavy responsibilities. Neither was he willing to accept the honour. My name was suggested. I did not want to take it up for two reasons. First, temperamentally I am one who steers clear of controversies and secondly, the next session of the Congress was to be held in Bihar and I would not be able to devote myself to the arrangements if I were to entangle myself in all-India affairs. I thought that I would not be able to improve matters by taking up the Presidentship and that the rot would stop only when elections were held for a new President. But all my arguments had to be waived when Gandhiji directed me to take up the responsibility.

The next day, Subhas Bose sent in his resignation. The A.-I.C.C. accepted it and appointed me President. As I stood up to speak, I heard shouts from a section of the pandal. I stood my ground till the shouting died down. The proceedings were then conducted without any more ado and in the evening the A.-I.C.C. adjourned. When I left the place some volunteers

offered to escort me to my residence. On the way, one or two of them, who were apparently sympathisers of the Bose group, seemed to be bent on mischief but they could do nothing more than pull my jacket. I only lost a few buttons and reached home safely. I spoke to no one of this fearing an increase of tension. When I left for Patna that night, I heard at the station that some miscreants had demonstrated before Dr. B. C. Roy's house, entered it and broken some furniture. In the new Working Committee I announced the next day, I included Dr. Roy and Dr. P. C. Ghosh. Jawaharlal would not be a member but he promised to extend his co-operation to the new Committee.

On return from Tripuri, along with some Bihar leaders, I began looking for a site for the next Congress session. In accordance with the convention of holding the sessions in a village, I first thought of Sonepur, in North Bihar, where the borders of three districts meet and where one of the biggest fairs in India is held every year on Karitiki Purnima in November. Thousands of head of cattle are exhibited at this fair for sale. There are several wells in the Mela grounds and water supply would be assured. I felt that we could buy bamboo and other construction material at very economical rates at the time of the breaking up of the fair for use for the Congress session which would be coming off three months later. The two earlier Congress sessions had been held in Patna and Gaya, in South Bihar, and I thought a chance should be given to North Bihar, considered to be solidly behind the organisation.

But then we had to think of other alternative sites too and decide on the best. So we began touring the province in search of a suitable site. On my invitation, Ramdas Gulati, an engineer who lived in Sewagram with Gandhiji and who was responsible for much of the construction work in Haripura and Tripuri, joined us in the search. We saw Rajgriha, in Patna district, an ancient place with historical associations. It was a healthy and beautiful place, but it was not easily accessible and lacked water-supply facilities. Phulwari Sharif, near Patna, was thought of next but it was too near the provincial capital and thus would lose its importance and at the same time lacked civic amenities.

The last choice was Ramgarh, in Hazaribagh district. The people of Chota Nagpur, particularly Ramnarain Singh, the veteran Congressman of Hazaribagh, had always been accusing us of neglecting Chota Nagpur and now wanted us to hold the Congress session in their area. Ramdas Gulati also favoured Ramgarh and we decided on that site. It has a healthy climate. Held in the midst of forests along the bank of the Damodar, we were sure the session would be a unique one in the annals of the Congress. The actual site was covered with shrubs and they had to be cleared. I deputed Ambika Kant Sinha for this work and he remained in the area throughout and did a thorough job. Ramdas Gulati prepared a draft plan for the arrangements. I stayed in Ranchi, 30 miles from Ramgarh, for some time and used to visit Ramgarh to see the work in progress. Then I left for a tour of the province for the collection of funds.

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An Unpleasant Task

As no regular business could be transacted in Calcutta, we held another meeting of the A.-I.C.C. in Bombay a few days after the Calcutta session. An important matter awaited its consideration. Trouble had been brewing for some time on the Congress ministerial front, not engineered from outside the Congress but emanating from within. Some Congressmen had been dissatisfied with the Congress ministries for some reason or other and had been making complaints and hindering their work. The ministries had been working according to the directives of the party and the Parliamentary Committee never interfered with them but remained vigilant to see that the ministries maintained the Congress policy and fulfilled the election pledges. The Congress ministries did adhere to the proclaimed intentions of the party at the time of the election, but a section of the Congressmen always kept on sniping at them. Opposition from the enemies of the Congress would have been understandable and also genuine differences of opinion between Congressmen and the ministries, which could have been ironed out. In fact, the ministries did try their best to iron them out. But what developed, which genuine Congressmen could not understand and which pained them most, was an organised opposition within the Congress party against the ministries.

Strength to this opposition was extended by Congress dissidents who had been incensed by Pandit Pant's resolution at the Tripuri session directing that Subhas Bose should form a Working Committee in consultation with Gandhiji if he did not want to shoulder the responsibility himself. These dissidents made much of the fact that Pandit Pant was the Chief Minister of the United Provinces and made an allegation that the Congress ministries were opposed to Subhas Bose and had used their influence in seeing that our Tripuri resolution was adopted. An organised effort, therefore, was made to discredit the ministries. Discontented elements like Dr. Khare and his colleagues who had been dropped out of the C.P.

Ministry joined this group which tried to wreak their vengeance upon the ministries for the acts of commission and omission of Congressmen like us who were out of the ministries. It was difficult for them to do anything against us directly but the ministries offered themselves as an easy enough target, because they were always doing something or the other and it was not difficult to pick holes in their decisions. Genuine complaints should have been placed before the P.C.C.s, the Parliamentary Committee, the Working Committee and, if necessary, the A.-I.C.C., which would have taken action against errant ministers or ministries. It was highly improper for Congressmen to work openly to discredit the ministries in the eyes of the public. But that was what the dissidents were bent on doing and it was necessary for the A.-I.C.C. to take notice.

At the Bombay session, a resolution was moved directing Congressmen not to indulge in sniping at the ministries. Subhas Bose and his followers opposed the resolution, but a majority of the members supported it and it was passed. We hoped the resolution would somehow curb the activities of these men but we were wrong. They redoubled their opposition and their injurious activities and we were compelled to take disciplinary action against Subhas Bose.

In open defiance of the majority view of the Congress, Subhas Bose announced a few days later that he would organise a countrywide demonstration against the A.-I.C.C. decision. I sent a telegram to him as President asking him to desist from such a course. But he refused to listen and went ahead with his preparations. Demonstrations were held at several places in which Congress workers participated. The Congress could not put up with this kind of open defiance of its directives. After all, the only democratic method to settle any difference of opinion is the method of the ballot, and when a majority has once taken a decision, it ought to have been respected and no action taken to flout it. The demonstrators had flouted the decision of the majority publicly, despite warnings, and the prestige of the organisation was bound to suffer. Action against the detractors became unavoidable for us.

The Working Committee convened a meeting and called upon Subhas Bose to explain his action. He did not attend the meeting but sent in an explanation justifying his action.

The Committee, therefore, reluctantly decided that disciplinary action against Subhas Bose was warranted. It was not easy to take action against a Congress leader of Subhas Bose's eminence. He had been twice elected Congress President; his patriotism, sincerity and sacrifices were absolutely beyond question. How could one take action against such a man? Most of us dreaded the idea. As for myself, I always had affection for him, while Sarat Bose, who was my contemporary in the Presidency College, Calcutta, and lived in my hostel, and I were good friends. Now the question was not one of personal likes or dislikes but one of duty, of deciding whether the Congress could keep quiet in the face of a setback to its prestige. We were therefore constrained to expel Subhas Bose from the Congress. As regards the other Congressmen who had acted with him, it was left for the P.C.C.s to take action against them.

Ever since the Tripuri session, Subhas Bose had been thinking in terms of setting up a new party under the name of Forward Bloc. When he was expelled from the Congress, he devoted himself wholly to the task of organising this party. When the provincial Congress committees took action against the other Congress supporters of Bose also, they joined the Forward Bloc, which began openly attacking the Congress.

There were two more disputes which came up before the Congress. It was a most unpleasant time that I had during the period of my second term as president. Complaints began to mount against the Orissa Ministry. Once before, when we were in Cuttack, Sardar Patel and I had tried to bring the opposing elements in the Congress Legislature Party together but our efforts did not succeed. Eventually, the matter came up before the Parliamentary Committee. Sardar Patel, its chairman, called for written complaints, stating that, if the complaints were borne out on inquiry, action would be taken against the Ministry, otherwise action would be taken against the complainants. A little earlier, while Subhas Bose was President, he had entrusted me with the work of inquiring into some of the complaints. I made several visits to Orissa and had to wade through lots of papers, hear both the parties and record statements of witnesses. By the time my report, which was in the nature of a judicial decision, was ready,

Subhas Bose had resigned. The report now came up before the Parliamentary Board and the Working Committee. The main complaints were found baseless and it was decided to take action against the complainant. But he tendered an apology and action against him was withdrawn. Those who were behind this complainant now came out into the open.

Principal among the discontented Congressmen agitating against the Orissa Ministry were Pandit Nilakanth Das and Godavari Misra, both of whom were opposed to Biswanath Das, Chief Minister, from the beginning. Both of them had been Congressmen since 1920 and were widely respected in Orissa. Nilakanth Das, a member of the Central Assembly at the time of the provincial elections in 1937, had not contested for the Provincial Assembly but was a contender for the leadership of the province. Godavari Misra was elected to the Provincial Assembly. When Nilakanth Das failed in his bid for the Chief Ministership, he began working against Biswanath Das. He began to cast aspersions on the integrity and moral character of Biswanath Das, which infuriated Sardar Patel who had to warn the complainants before inquiring into their complaints.

When his plan misfired, Pandit Nilakanth Das joined hands with Subhas Bose after his expulsion. His activities became more and more anti-Congress in the Central Assembly to which he had been elected on the Congress ticket. Then he refused to submit to Congress discipline and resigned from the party. At the outbreak of the war in Europe when the Congress ministries resigned, he and Godavari Misra made strenuous efforts to form a ministry. When their attempts to seduce Congress M.L.A.s failed, bent on coming into power, they threw in their lot with the landlords. A Ministry was formed with the Maharaja of Parlakimedi as Chief Minister and Godavari Misra as one of the Ministers. They somehow enlisted the co-operation of some Congressmen and threw some Congress M.L.A.s in prison and managed to secure a majority in the Assembly.

The second dispute we had to contend with was that of the Central Provinces where too there were complaints against the ministry. There had been dissensions within the ministry, primarily between Shukla and D. P. Mishra, on the one hand,

and Dr. Khare, on the other, and they had ended in the exit of Khare and the formation of a new ministry under the leadership of Shukla. Complaints persisted against D. P. Mishra, a minister in the new Cabinet. The Parliamentary Committee entrusted the inquiry to Bhulabhai Desai but the complainants declared that they had no confidence in him, and I had to take up the work myself. I made a thorough inquiry and gave my decision which was ratified by the Working Committee. Some of the dissidents continued to cry for modification of my report but the decision was announced in the press and the matter was closed. Most of my time was thus taken up in such matters and I hardly got an opportunity to do anything constructive during the presidentship this time. Further, I almost lost touch with my own province but I somehow managed to visit some places to collect funds for the Ramgarh Congress.

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Congress and World War

I WAS in Ramgarh, looking after the preliminary arrangements for the Congress session, when the newspapers flashed the news that Hitler had invaded Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war against Germany. The European war was on. The British Government declared India a belligerent without consulting her leaders. Jawaharlal was at that time visiting China. Mahatma Gandhi met the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow. After the interview Gandhiji issued a statement expressing sympathy with Britain and advising India to offer unconditional help to her. Many in the country misconstrued the statement.

The Working Committee was convened in Wardha to consider the situation. I was not quite well and Gandhiji specially sent Mahadev Desai to Ramgarh to accompany me to Wardha. On the eve of the meeting, Jawaharlal returned from China. The question before us was what attitude to take on the issue of the war. Should the Congress help the war effort and, if so, should the help be unconditional or modified by some conditions? In this violent conflict, how could the Congress, with her declared policy of non-violence, render any help? After several days' discussions, the Working Committee thought of a *via media*. An elegantly worded resolution was drafted by Jawaharlal. Expressing its opposition to Nazism and Fascism, the Working Committee condemend imperialism also and insisted on the British Government clarifying its war aims with a view to enabling India to help Britain voluntarily in her war effort.

This unequivocal statement led the British to accuse Gandhiji of having gone back on his original statement. Many Congressmen had been opposed to Gandhiji's offer of unconditional help to Britain in an imperialistic war. The fact was that both the parties were wrong. Gandhiji never contemplated that India would help the war effort with men and money. His idea was that the sympathy of a dependent country like India would be of such great value to the British that it would enlist

in their support the sympathy of the entire world. Gandhiji's statement had undoubtedly created a stir in political circles, although when he made it he had only thought of extending to Britain our moral support and sympathy.

At the Working Committee session it became clear that, though wedded to non-violence, the Congress could not refuse to help the British and, if the occasion demanded it, it would not desist from helping them with men and arms. It is necessary to state this clearly because some Englishmen, particularly L. S. Amery, Secretary of State for India during the war, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, and senior officials of the Government of India never hesitated to say later that the Congress did not help the war effort because of Gandhiji's policy of non-violence. The Working Committee resolution, however, made it perfectly clear that if the British Government could declare its aims in a satisfactory manner, the Congress would be forced to help the war effort. Many people in India, and there were many Congressmen too, were sympathetic towards Britain at that time and if she had adduced some proof, as her leading statesmen and newspapers were shouting from housetops, that she was really fighting for democracy, the whole of India would have been behind her unreservedly. But actually, Britain was fighting a war for the defence of the British Empire, although to win over the sympathies of wavering nations, it was claimed to be a war to save democracy. This was to be confirmed very soon afterwards.

After the resolution was adopted, I met Lord Linlithgow twice as Congress President, once along with Jawaharlal Nehru and the second time with Gandhiji and Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The Viceroy was then meeting representative Indians of all schools of thought with a view to enlisting India's help in the war. He had made one mistake. As soon as the war began, without consulting anyone, he had declared that India too was on the side of Britain in her war with Germany. The Central Assembly was then in session and popular ministries were in office in eleven provinces, but he did not deem it important or necessary that their views should be invited, as if the war were not a matter of concern for any individual or institution in India. The Congress Working Committee resented this action of the Viceroy, so did other

sections of the Indian people. In these circumstances, it was neither proper nor possible for anyone to say anything till the British clarified their position.

To appease Indian political parties, Lord Linlithgow proposed to appoint two more Indians on his Executive Council so as to give Indians a majority voice in the Council, but at the same time he firmly stated that these Executive Councillors would have the same rights and privileges which former members had enjoyed so far, that is to say, they would be no more than heads of departments without any independent powers. He said that meetings of the Executive Council were held to apprise its members of the developments in their departments and to facilitate discussion of issues but that the responsibility of taking decisions on all important questions was ultimately on the Viceroy who alone had all the powers. He was not willing to countenance any constitutional changes for the duration of the war. Whatever proposals he made were to be fitted within the framework of the Government of India Act, 1935.

The demands of the Congress were two: First, besides clarification of British war aims, it wanted Indian independence to form part of the post-war plans of the British Government; and secondly, the Congress demanded that Indian representatives should be given certain administrative powers at the Centre with immediate effect so that they might be able to carry on the Government according to the wishes of the people and thus be able to render genuine help in the war effort. Even if the declaration of future independence were not pressed, immediate transfer of certain rights was absolutely necessary to enthuse the Indian people and to enable them to extend willing help to Britain.

Despite all this, the Congress never followed a policy of hindering the war effort. Always a supporter of democracy as against imperialism, it wanted British imperialism to evolve into genuine democracy in order that all her possessions and colonies might become free. Of course, Britain never deprecated that ideal of ours and, in fact, she agreed that independence was the ultimate aim of her policy. She only pleaded that India and the other colonies were not at that time fit to govern themselves and that, therefore, she considered it

her duty to retain in her hands the responsibility of governing them and preparing them for ultimate self-government. We, Indians, did not accept this position and that was the cause of our conflict with Britain.

At the beginning of the war, there was a lot of talk about democracy, but the Congress, by raising a few inconvenient questions, pricked the bubble of British claims. Our main question was whether the promised democracy would also be for India and other suppressed nations of Asia and Africa or it would be the sole possession of the British and other European nations only. If that declaration applied equally to the people of Asia and Africa, we only desired that it should be announced in plain language and an assurance to that effect conveyed to the people of those areas and some powers transferred to them as a practical proof of future good intentions.

During the period October 1939 to 1942, India and the Congress got no satisfactory reply to their questions. An effort was made by Britain to camouflage her real objective, which was to keep the Empire intact. Lord Linlithgow made repeated overtures but his proposals could not satisfy any political party. To please the Muslim League he announced that the Government of India Act, 1935 would be considered *de novo* after the war. The Congress had also strongly opposed the 1935 Act and, in fact, except for some liberals and moderates, no political party had agreed to work it. It appeared, therefore, that Lord Linlithgow was making a bid to please not only the Muslim League but the other parties as well. His actions, however, disproved it. He only wanted to set up another party against the Congress and then plead inability to do anything until both the parties were able to evolve a common demand. He thus wanted to show the world that Britain was prepared to transfer power to the hands of Indians but that they were hopelessly divided among themselves, forcing Britain to retain the reins of Government in her own hands. Lord Linlithgow played this game more or less successfully during his tenure of office.

When our interviews with the Viceroy bore no fruit, we convened a meeting of the Working Committee in October 1939 to decide the next step. The position of the Congress ministries in the provinces had now become untenable and

the question was whether it should be allowed to continue. Prolonged discussions followed. A section of Congressmen pleaded for the retention in our hands of whatever little power we had acquired and opposed the idea of resignation by the Congress ministries. They believed that by remaining in power in the provinces, the Congress would be able to render great services to the people, undo any harm caused to them by the war and derive the maximum advantage from any good that the war might bring. Most of the people, however, felt that if the war situation grew more serious, the Central Government would take more and more responsibility on itself and the provincial Governments would be rendered powerless. There was no chance of having any Indians of influence on the Executive Council to safeguard the interests of the provinces. The Executive Council itself would be powerless and would be able to do nothing beyond toeing the line for the Viceroy and the Member for War. The public would be expected to contribute to the War Fund and, as voluntary help could not be thought of, the provincial Governments would be in the invidious position of having to resort to pressure in the collection of funds, which was contrary to the principles of popular administration. Withdrawing from provincial Governments would be far preferable to facing such an untenable position of responsibility without power.

The Working Committee, therefore, decided that in the event of the British Government's reply to its demands being unsatisfactory, it would have to advise the Congress ministries to resign. The A.-I.C.C., which also met at Wardha, ratified the decision. When no satisfactory reply was received from the Viceroy, the Working Committee issued instructions to the Provincial Governments to adopt resolutions embodying the Congress demands in the legislative assemblies and thereafter tender their resignations. Consequently, in November 1939, all the Congress ministries in the provinces relinquished office.

The Congress had such a large majority in the assemblies that it was not possible for any other parties to form governments. This only suited the British who could do what they liked by assuming direct control over the administrations. Therefore, in pursuance of Section 93 of the Government of

India Act, 1935, the Viceroy took charge of provincial administrations. The Governors, to whom the powers were relegated, were authorised even to amend and abrogate the existing laws. Soon after the outbreak of the war, on the plea of exigencies caused by the war, the Viceroy had amended the 1935 Constitution to enable him to take over the provincial administrations as and when he desired. The resignation of Congress ministries served only to clear the way for him.

There are some who hold that it was a mistake for the Congress ministries to have resigned and that had they remained in office they might have been able to prevent the excesses and atrocities of the British regime. But these people seem to have forgotten the provisions of the amendment to the Constitution then in force. In provinces where popular ministries remained in power, nothing could be done to prevent such excesses. The Ministry in Bengal furnished the best illustration. The Governor had a free hand in the forming and breaking up of ministries. Hundreds of thousands of people in the province died of starvation and the Ministry could neither remove the causes responsible for the famine nor do anything by way of relief for the victims till the Central Government came on the scene to help. With all their so-called powers, neither Fazlul Huq nor Khwaja Nazimuddin could avert that catastrophe. The helplessness of the Punjab and Sind ministries were also evident when the Central Government forced them to adopt measures for the fixation of prices and export of foodgrains.

The powers enjoyed by the provincial Governments were limited, and the Ordinances promulgated after the outbreak of the war deprived them of even those limited powers. The Central Government thus proved that the powers of the Provincial Governments were illusory and that real powers were vested in the Viceroy. Although the Bengal, Punjab and Sind Ministries stood for helping the war effort, yet the Government of India had no hesitation in overriding them. There is not the least doubt that if the Congress ministries had stuck to office, without a satisfactory agreement between the Congress and the Central Government, they would have been compelled to do things repugnant to the principles and ideologies of the

Congress, and unless they wanted to stay as yes-men they would have been forced to resign anyway.

In the later years of the war, it became clear that the Congress misgivings in 1939 were fully justified. Churchill announced in plain words that the British intended to stick to what they had got and that he had "not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire." The British Premier's and the Secretary of State's statements on the Indian question could have left no one in doubt as to the intentions of the British Government. Therefore, when we asked the Congress ministries to resign, I am convinced we did the right thing. In the then circumstances, as ministers, Congressmen would have been unable to do any good and would have become mere tools in the hands of the Governors for furthering the war effort.

Nevertheless, I cannot say that I would have liked Britain to be defeated in the war. I could not certainly reconcile myself to a German victory. Germany had invaded Czechoslovakia because the latter was weaker. At that time Hungary and Poland could not resist the temptation of throwing themselves on the fallen victim to share in the spoils with Germany. When, therefore, Poland's turn to face Hitler's hordes came, I could not help feeling at first that the Poles were merely reaping what they had sown. But when, later, the German army, in a sweep, took Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium, I was deeply distressed, because Hitler made it clear that he would not let any weaker nation survive. My feeling of anger against the British for denying India her rights was somewhat assuaged and I somehow felt that it was our duty to help the British in defeating Germany and help stop the rot.

I was so much overpowered by these thoughts that I could not help issuing a statement to this effect. I am sure that many Congressmen felt as I did. In spite of the weakness of the British Government and its unjust treatment of India, German aggression had so much staggered us that for the moment we all forgot the acts of the British imperialists. It would, therefore, be untrue to say, as some Englishmen did at that time, that the Indian people welcomed the adversity of the British as their opportunity.

When, in July, 1940, the A.-I.C.C. in Bombay asked the British Government to give an assurance that India would be given freedom after the war as a precondition to helping the war effort, I can say that there was no bitterness in the heart of any Indian against the British and a large majority of Indians really thought it their duty to help Britain. They only wanted certain powers to enable them to carry out that duty. Without these powers the people could not be enthused.

The A.-I.C.C.'s proposals were adopted against Gandhiji's advice and he, therefore, withdrew again from the Congress. When even that resolution was unceremoniously rejected by the British, India felt the insult bitterly and Churchill's and Amery's subsequent statements only increased that bitterness. If an agreement had been reached at that time, Burma's problem too would have been solved and perhaps Japan would have thought many times before plunging into war. If Japan had been convinced that, with all their resources, Indians were with the British, she would not have had the courage to swoop down on the Far Eastern countries as she did. Malaya, Singapore and Burma would have been spared the experiences which they had to pass through. I am sure that never in her long history has Britain shown such a lack of farsightedness as when she rejected the hand of friendship held out by the Congress in 1940. The only exception, perhaps, was when she spurned the offer of the American colonies in 1775. The consequence of that purblindness was not good for Britain, though, of course, it has proved to be for the good of the world.

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Ramgarh Congress Session

DURING the war, the annual Congress sessions became an uncertain affair. We stuck, however, to the decision of holding the Ramgarh session in March 1940. I could not devote much attention to the preliminary arrangements. Ambika Kant Sinha stayed in Ramgarh throughout to supervise the work. When the ministries resigned, other Congressmen like Anugrah Narain Sinha, Krishna Ballabh Sahay and Ram Narain Sinha came to assist him.

There was no dearth of bamboo and timber in Ramgarh. There was no lack of labour. It did not take us long, therefore, to complete the work of clearing the shrubs and building huts. Ramdas Gulati, the engineer who was in charge of construction, fell sick and had to leave the place. Fortunately, Ramji Prasad Verma, a lifelong Congressman who had served imprisonment in 1930 in the country's cause, just then returned from England after completing his post-graduate course in engineering, and he was entrusted with the work. Residential huts and separate pandals for the open session, the Working Committee and the Subjects Committee were erected. Arrangements for electric lighting were completed.

The few wells on the site of the session could not be depended upon for a supply of water adequate to meet the requirements of even a small fraction of the visitors. We turned for supplies to the Damodar on the banks of which the Congress Nagar was springing up. Though its level rises during the rains and causes extensive havoc in Bihar and West Bengal, particularly in Burdwan District, during the summer it is more or less dry and there is only a narrow stream of water, but there is a lot of subsoil water, which we decided to draw upon for our requirements. We sank some wells in the bed of the river, built two or three big tanks for storage, laid down pipelines, and the arrangements for water supply for the Congress township were complete. Waterworks engineers attached to the Gaya and Bhagalpur municipalities helped in these arrangements. There was one drawback. Our wells, being

situated in the bed of the river, could be rendered unserviceable if the river flooded all of a sudden. But who could think of floods on the Damodar in March!

There is a small stream called the Hurhuri which flows into the Damodar near Ramgarh. We also dammed the Hurhuri so that the stored water could be used for drinking purposes. One portion of the dam became a sort of a tank which could be used as a swimming pool, while the overflow gave the effect of a small waterfall on the other side.

The difficult task of organising the usual village industries exhibition was in the hands of Lakshmi Narain, secretary of the Charkha Sangh. With the help of the All-India Charkha Sangh and the Village Industries Association, he put up an excellent show. A village industries enthusiast, he managed to keep electricity out of the exhibition premises. A number of promising painters were coming up in Bihar then. It was suggested to me that paintings of salient events in the history of Bihar could be prepared and exhibited at the session. I approved of the idea and Ishwari Prasad Verma, a famous artist, formerly Vice-Principal of the Calcutta School of Arts and now settled in Patna, took charge of the project. Apart from the exhibition of the fine paintings he and his colleagues produced, we had copies of them printed and published in book form. Another good suggestion, though not a paying proposition, which we translated into action was a history of Bihar in Hindi for the benefit of visitors to the Congress session. Jai Chandra Vidyalankar wrote it and Ramlochan Sharma of Laheria Serai undertook the publication. The book came out in time for the opening of the session, but the sales were not encouraging.

I had been elected Chairman of the Reception Committee. There had been several people contending for the honour and, to avoid a contest, some of my friends pressed me to take up the office and I agreed. After the Working Committee session in Patna, I left for Ramgarh by car. On the way I stopped at Nalanda and saw the excavated buildings and the Archaeological Museum. I had a feeling of shame that having lived in Patna for so long I should have so far neglected a visit to the place, which is in Patna district. The visit increased my respect for the great past of Bihar. Then I left for Rajouli,

where I made a two-day halt at the dak bungalow, from where one can get a fine view of the thickly-wooded forests and hills beyond. In that fine location, I wrote my address as Chairman of the Reception Committee. In the speech, I briefly surveyed the history of Bihar, deliberately leaving out current problems and topical questions.

I then reached Ramgarh to look into the final arrangements. Seen from the main road and the Damodar bridge, the Congress Nagar presented a picturesque sight. The huts made of bamboo and *hogla* leaf matting were attractive. The rows of huts erected for the leaders, for Gandhiji and the Congress President on the Hurhuri and the Damodar, with roads and lanes running between them were impressive in appearance. The Congress Nagar was named after Mazharul Haq and one of the gates after Deepnarain Singh.

Gandhiji arrived in time to inaugurate the exhibition. A day before it had rained heavily, impeding the final arrangements at the stalls, but somehow we completed them and Gandhiji opened the exhibition according to schedule. We hoped that the sky would clear and that the weather would improve after that shower, but we had a worse experience in store for us.

The President-elect, Maulana Azad — who had been returned by an overwhelming majority in the contest with M. N. Roy — detrained at the Ranchi Road railway station and was brought to the Congress Nagar in a big procession.

The two-day meetings of the Subjects Committee and the A.-I.C.C. were successfully completed. Then, for the open session, thousands of people assembled at Ramgarh. The revenue from visitors' admission tickets came to over Rs. 6,000 an hour. The session was to open at five in the evening. It is customary to bring the President and prominent leaders to the dais in a procession. I left for the President's hut to fetch him to the pandal. The procession was about to be formed when it suddenly started raining. The downpour was so heavy that pools began to form in the roads and lanes. Visitors and delegates patiently sat in the open pandal, hoping the rain would stop, but the hope did not materialise. Water began to rush into the pandal, making the dais look like an island. Lighting and loud-speaker arrangements failed. Somehow the

President reached the dais. This was no time for speech-making. I condensed my address as Chairman of the Reception Committee to a few words and the President addressed the session for a minute or two, and the day's session concluded.

It only drizzled the following day and, as the pandal had been rendered completely useless, we decided to hold the open session in the open space round the flagstaff. Despite the drizzle, there was a big crowd. Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders sat on the ground near the flagstaff while all round them squatted the delegates and visitors. The resolutions were moved and, after short discussions, adopted. The policy followed by the Working Committee and the A.-I.C.C. since the outbreak of the war was ratified. It was a brisk and businesslike session. Gandhiji made a short speech. Then, concluding the proceedings, I offered my apology to the people for the inconvenience caused to them. As floods in the Damodar river had put our waterworks out of gear, the filtered water in our reservoirs would not last more than 24 hours and the visitors would have to depend on the muddy waters of the Damodar. I, therefore, requested them to leave the place. The session then ended. The people took my advice, and the Congress Nagar began to empty quickly. The President and other leaders departed by the evening train.

At the time of the Congress session, Ramgarh was the venue for another big conference called the Anti-Compromise Conference, the brain child of Subhas Bose. His principal supporters in Bihar, Swami Sahajanand and Dhanraj Sharma, were the organisers of the conference. The conference attracted a large number of people. Its main slogan was no compromise with the British. It alleged that the Congress was determined to arrive at a compromise with the British Government even to the detriment of the country. The Congress neither craved for a compromise at the cost of the country's good not was it afraid of a compromise. But we had not to take these charges seriously. After all, what was the Forward Bloc, the new party founded by Bose? It was a motley crowd of people of diverse views, many of whom had no political or ideological affinities with Subhas Bose, but who, having fallen foul of the Congress, got an opportunity to carry on a campaign against it.

A few days after the Ramgarh Congress, the Muslim League held its annual session. A resolution favouring Pakistan, which had been its main slogan, was adopted. In the following year, the League accepted the formation of Pakistan as its foremost objective. I did not know much about the Pakistan plan till November 1939 when, during my stay in Wardha, I made a special study of this demand. I then prepared a long article which was published in *The Hindustan Times* at the time of the Ramgarh Congress. Later, it was published in the form of a book which enlightened many who were till then ignorant of the implications of the Pakistan demand.

A survey of the Muslim League's activities would be apposite here. At the time of the Legislative Assembly elections in 1937, the League was a weak organisation. It did not wield any great influence in the country. In many provinces, it did not exist at all. That is why League representatives could not be taken in Congress ministries and independent Muslims who had been elected to assemblies had to be invited to join them. In the U.P., an effort was made to include a Muslim Leaguer in the Cabinet, and, as no agreement was arrived at, no Muslim had been taken in the Cabinet. Probably, had the effort been successful, it would have deprived the League of much of the strength it acquired in the province later. As it was, the failure created great resentment in League circles and the party made rabid propaganda against the Congress its principal activity.

Allegations that the Congress ministries were not treating the Muslims fairly were made day in and day out. The campaign culminated in the appointment of an inquiry committee under the chairmanship of the Raja of Pirpur. It prepared a report giving a formidable list of " atrocities committed by the Congress on the Muslims." In Bihar, Sharif, a barrister, published a similar report in two volumes. Imagination was given full rein in both the reports. In the provincial assemblies in the Congress-majority provinces, the Ministries answered each charge and contradicted the baseless allegations. But nothing that the Congress said could reach the Muslims because they were fed only by the League's mendacious propaganda. In this campaign, the League followed the strategy of Goebbels, Hitler's Information Minister,

of vilifying the adversary by levelling against him baseless charges which by their constant iteration could not but influence the people. The League's campaign of hatred widened the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims.

The allegations in the Pirpur and Sharif reports were never investigated by an impartial tribunal or a court of law. During 1939, when I was Congress President, I wrote to Jinnah signifying our readiness to have the Muslim grievances inquired into by the Chief Judge of the Federal Court, Sir Maurice Gwyer, or any other impartial individual like him. He rejected my offer and said that the matter was pending before the Viceroy, who would do whatever he thought fit. But Lord Linlithgow never said anything about the Muslim League charges because, perhaps, Jinnah himself did not want it. The Viceroy, who was not particularly happy with the Congress attitude to the war effort, and was, therefore, ready to encourage the League as a bulwark against the Congress, accepted the League demand that the Constitution would be reconsidered after the war and that the provision regarding Federation would be dropped. This was exactly what the League was agitating for and it welcomed the decision with exultation. When the Congress ministries went out of office, Jinnah ordered the India-wide celebration of "Deliverance Day" by Muslims. The propaganda had such a baneful effect even on sensible Muslims that on the day the Bihar Ministry resigned, the late Khurshed Husnain sent me a telegram of congratulations!

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Sonepur Camp

We decided to take up immediately constructive work on which the Ramgarh Congress had laid a great stress. Gandhiji had called on workers and volunteers to devote some time to spinning and to adopt the community way of living. We decided, therefore, to start a camp in which the prominent workers of Bihar would each get training for at least a week. Sonepur was selected as the venue of the camp and a date was fixed for its inauguration. But before I could go there I wanted to free myself of some pending work.

The Bihar Ministry had assigned to me three tasks. I had been made chairman of the Bihar Labour Inquiry Committee and had been appointed member on the Education Inquiry Committee and the Hindustani Committee. I wanted the Committees to complete their work quickly. The Ministry that had set up these committees had gone out of office but it was better to finalise the reports which might be useful later.

The Education Committee had Prof. K. T. Shah, the well-known economist and educationist, as chairman and besides me, Dr. Zakir Husain, K. G. Saiyidain, Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha and Badri Nath Verma as members. The report was prepared in three parts. The first part contained our recommendations on primary education. Our main suggestions were based on the principles of the Wardha system of basic education. K. T. Shah, Dr. Husain and Saiyidain were the principal protagonists of the system. I was happy that the system, associated with Gandhiji's name, received universal acclaim in Bihar. There were, however, differences of opinion on the earn-as-you-learn scheme. Along with Gandhiji, I was convinced that the adoption of the scheme would help a poor country like ours and that it would help substantially to meet the expenses of education. Other members of the committee would not go that far and were of the view that if we placed an accent on the monetary aspect, the aesthetic aspect would receive less emphasis and children's education would suffer in consequence. We circumvented this difficulty by stating that

although we did not entirely ignore the economic aspect of the system, it would not be one of our aims. Children would learn handicrafts for the sake of learning and acquiring a skill but not with a view to earning during training. The second part of the report dealt with secondary education and the third, with university and higher education. Each report was the work of a sub-committee and I was a member on the sub-committees dealing with primary and university education. After the sub-committees' reports had been approved by the Committee, they were submitted to the Government.

K. T. Shah was a very industrious man and he worked very hard on the Committee. I came to know him intimately on this occasion and I was delighted to see his goodness, his deep attachment to work and his erudition. Similarly, the occasion provided me with an opportunity of close association with Dr. Zakir Husain and Saiyidain and I came to like both of them. Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha had been something of a guardian to me from my student days. He looked upon me as his younger brother. Political differences between us never affected our mutual affection. Our association on this committee enhanced the mutual esteem. If I was like a younger brother to him, Badri Nath Verma considered me his elder brother, and we two never had any political differences. Bhavanath Mukerjee, secretary of the Committee, was an old acquaintance. He was my pupil in the Bhumihar Brahmin College of Muzaffarpur when I was on its staff. He later became an educationist and filled a high post in the Education Department. Even now he has the same regard for me as he had during the days of the Committee.

The Labour Inquiry Committee, which concerned itself only with factory workers, toured the province and visited all the big factories and mines. Workers in no other province are called upon to undertake so many diverse jobs and on such a big scale as the workers of Bihar. I accompanied the members almost everywhere except to the sugar factories and saw at first-hand the conditions of the workers. We heard the workers and employers and recorded their statements. Then the drafting of the report was entrusted to the secretary of the Committee, Rajendra Kishore Saran. The report was ready just before the Ramgarh session and after the session I called

a meeting of the Committee in Patna to finalise it. For two weeks we sat in daily sessions, from 7.30 in the morning to 8 in the evening, with an hour for lunch break, and studied the report after which it was finally approved in April 1940.

The report, the principal recommendations of which were unanimous, was the result of the best effort on the part of every member. With representatives of the employers and workers and some neutrals combining their labours to produce a report which would be acceptable to all sections, the report became a valuable document. Although, till then, the war had not influenced the economic conditions in the country in any appreciable measure, we knew that the situation would soon change considerably. We knew further that the situation might be such that our recommendations might not be implemented, still we did our duty to the best of our ability, because we felt that the data we had collected might be useful in any inquiry that might be held in the future. We were sure that if the Congress were to come into power again, it would take up the study of the report, but, unfortunately, our hopes were not fulfilled. The Committee's report never came off the shelf to which it had been consigned by the Advisors' Government. We heard later that some steps were taken to act upon one suggestion of ours — the establishment of a separate Labour Department.

Heymen, who had joined Tatas as Chief Accountant after his retirement from the Railway Board, served on this Committee and I found him very hard-working and progressive in his ideas. Had he and M. P. Gandhi, representatives of the employers, not worked so hard, the report could not have been unanimous. Similarly, unanimity would have been jeopardised if Abdul Bari, the workers' delegate, had not shown a spirit of accommodation. Radhakamal Mukerjee and Rajendra Kishore helped the Committee considerably with their deep study of labour problems. Bakhle's experience of the working of trade unions and Jagat Narain Lal and Harendra Bahadur Chandra's specialised knowledge of conditions in Bihar were also an asset to the Committee.

The work of the Hindustani Committee, entrusted with the task of preparing a dictionary of technical and other words acceptable to Hindi and Urdu protagonists, a Hindustani

grammar and textbooks for higher classes, was a long-drawn-out affair and was completed only in 1943. Different sub-committees dealt with the different jobs assigned to the Committee. I could not participate in any work except the preliminaries connected with the appointment of sub-committees and my arrest in 1942 interrupted my association with the Committee. The appointment of the Committee was not well received in Bihar or outside the province. Protagonists of Hindi thought that it was an anti-Hindi move. I certainly cannot admit that I am an opponent of Hindi or that I can do any disservice to that language. Similarly, the supporters of Urdu can never look upon Dr. Abdul Huq as the opponent of Urdu because he has done yeoman service to that language and has taken active part in all Urdu literary movements. Lovers of both Hindi and Urdu were opposed to our Committee and they made baseless charges against it, creating confusion in the public mind.

When I had completed work on the Labour Inquiry Committee, I left for Wardha, where the Congress Working Committee was meeting. After the session I proceeded to Sonepur where the Congress workers' camp had been organised and 200 prominent workers had gathered. I stayed there for a week. Besides spinning and conducting spinning classes, I gave several talks to the workers every day. The evening meetings took the shape of mass gatherings, people from the neighbouring villages joining us. We laid great emphasis on constructive work as the principal source of our strength, not because it prepared the people for revolt, but because it trained men in the art of self-control and discipline, the essential qualities of a satyagrahi, and provided an opportunity to workers to come into close contact with the people.

When I returned to Patna I broke down under the strain caused by the intensive work I had taken on myself since the Ramgarh session. A few days after my return I felt giddy and fell down almost unconscious. Dr. Sharma and Dr. Bannerji rushed to attend on me and were concerned about my condition. The feeling of giddiness did not leave me for several days, and, after I recovered from it, the doctors advised long rest. I went to Zeradei to recuperate. A month of quiet did me a lot of good.

100

Individual Satyagraha

THE situation in Europe was grave. Hitler was overrunning one country after another. He had already occupied Poland, Denmark and Norway by May, 1940. Then came the invasion of Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg and in ten days the three nations had capitulated. When the panzer troops of Hitler turned their full force on France, the position of the British forces became untenable and it was with great difficulty that they could complete their evacuation from Dunkirk. The Chamberlain Government fell and it was replaced by a national Government under the leadership of Winston Churchill (with L. S. Amery as Secretary of State for India). Seeing her chance, Italy joined Germany and declared war on Britain and France. Towards the end of June, 1940 hostilities ceased in France. It was a moment of grave crisis for Britain.

The Congress Working Committee met in Delhi and discussed this serious situation. It decided to ask England in plain language to settle the Indian problem once and for all so that the Congress might be in a position to offer her whatever help it could. There was prolonged discussion on the question. Gandhiji was not in favour of giving active help to Britain in the war effort as he thought it was opposed to the Congress ideal of *ahimsa*. His offer to England was one of moral support. Gandhiji believed, and I entirely agreed with him, that if Britain conceded independence to India at that juncture, her moral stature would rise so high that no country in the world would dare oppose her. A declaration by the Congress that India was fully satisfied, that she was with Britain would have been enough to put her on a high pedestal. Despite Congress neutrality, Britain was getting whatever she wanted from India by way of help in the war effort, and so, Gandhiji said, the Congress need not deviate from its ideal. Besides, he firmly believed, if India could stick to the ideal of *ahimsa*, it would have a tremendous effect on world opinion after the war.

On the other hand, there were several who felt that we would be honour bound to help Britain actively if we were given the independence we demanded from her. The ideal of *ahimsa* to which the Congress subscribed, they said, applied only to the Congress struggle for freedom and that post-independence eventualities or an invasion by a foreign Power could not be covered by it. They asserted that we had no right to make such a commitment on behalf of the India of tomorrow. But on one issue we all agreed, and that was to stick to *ahimsa* for the attainment of freedom and the solution of internal disputes.

The existence of two sections, one favouring a restricted application of *ahimsa* and another believing in *ahimsa* without compromise, thus came into bold relief. Although the war developments had upset me, I was at one with Gandhiji. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's faith in non-violence was unshakable. When, therefore, the Working Committee decided to extend active assistance to Britain should she transfer power to Indian hands immediately, Ghaffar Khan, some other members and I resigned from the Committee. But on the request of Maulana Azad, Congress President, that we desist till the British Government had replied to the Congress demand, some of us withdrew our resignations. But the Frontier leader was not to be prevailed upon. Gandhiji decided to sever all connections with the organisation. These developments created a stir in the country.

Another meeting of the Working Committee was called at Wardha and later a meeting of the A.-I.C.C. was convened at Poona. Those who opposed the Delhi decision attended these meetings but Gandhiji stayed away. These meetings could not iron out the differences. At the A.-I.C.C. session I explained the standpoint of the critics of the resolution and said that we would not oppose the resolution but remain neutral in case of a division. But others of our camp opposed the resolution despite my statement. The A.-I.C.C. ratified the Working Committee decision by a majority of votes. Had not many of the opponents remained neutral, in all probability the resolution would have been rejected. The resolution was despatched to the Viceroy. It was expected that the British Government would give the letter its due consideration and then begin negotiations with the Congress. But no such

thing happened. A few days later, it was announced that the Government had rejected the Congress offer.

In the course of a communique, Lord Linlithgow announced that the British Government could not alter the Constitution while Britain was engaged in a life and death struggle. It could appoint prominent Indians connected with the leading political parties on the Viceroy's Executive Council, but they would have the same status and powers as the existing Councillors. The Viceroy also said that a separate Consultative Council would be appointed to tender advice in connection with the conduct of the war and prominent Indians would be appointed on this Committee also. The communique made it clear that the British Government was not willing to transfer power into Indian hands. The house of cards which the Congress Working Committee and the A.-I.C.C. had built thus collapsed in the twinkling of an eye.

The Poona A.-I.C.C. meeting also adopted a resolution on non-violence, affirming the Congress adherence to the ideal in the matter of attainment of freedom and the settlement of internal disputes. Although this resolution was adopted unanimously, I doubt if any Congressman cared to remember it. That was because the war had rendered our faith in *ahimsa* somewhat flexible, which was but natural. Many agreed to adhere to it only as a matter of policy. A small minority believed in it as a matter of faith. Internal differences on the issue had not come up to the surface so far because this was the first time that the Congress was faced with the application of its creed to a situation other than the struggle with the British Government. Now that the differences had become marked, the rank and file in the party got somewhat confused. The confusion proved to be something like a crack in a dam, which gets bigger and bigger under the pressure of water, because it increased with the passage of time.

In Poona, I developed pneumonia but I somehow travelled to Wardha. It was the rainy season and I could expect no abatement in my trouble. But when I recovered a little Seth Jamnalal Bajaj advised a long rest in the dry climate of Rajasthan and offered to accompany me there. Gandhiji approved of the idea and, accordingly, Jamnalal and I left for Jaipur. There we were caught up in rainy weather and I had a relapse,

forcing me to stay there for a few days. When I was slightly better, on the advice of some friends, we left for the dry sandy place of Sikar, where we stayed for a month. It was in Sikar that I began to write my autobiography. During my stay I visited the village of Kashi-ka-bas, the birth place of Seth Jamnalal and also a beautiful place called Lokagarji, considered a place of pilgrimage. At the end of a month's stay, I was feeling very much better and I returned to Patna.

While we were in Sikar, the A.-I.C.C. met in Bombay to consider the British Government's announcement and decided to reject the offer. It thought that the time had come for the Congress to act and turned to Gandhiji for a plan. Gandhiji suggested a satyagraha of a new kind. It was not to be collective but individual and only such persons would be chosen for participation as had proved their worth by their contribution in any sphere of the constructive programme. Further, participation would be restricted to persons with representative qualifications, such as members of institutions or organisations like the legislative assemblies, local bodies or Congress committees. The A.-I.C.C. approved of the programme and entrusted Gandhiji with the task of conducting it. He agreed and said that none would be allowed to offer satyagraha without his permission. He chose Vinoba Bhave, a Congress worker of exceptional merit, to inaugurate the movement.

Vinoba offered satyagraha by shouting anti-war slogans at a small village a few miles from Wardha and he was immediately arrested. Then legislators and office-bearers of Congress committees were allowed to offer satyagraha one by one. They were followed by constructive workers who were habitual spinners or had worked for the removal of untouchability. The provincial Congress committees prepared lists of qualified persons and sent them to Gandhiji and only those approved by him offered satyagraha. The satyagrahi would announce that he would not do anything to help the war effort. He would promptly be arrested, tried and sentenced to one year's imprisonment but, because of remissions usually granted to prisoners, he would be released after nine months. The satyagrahis began coining slogans like "*Na ek bhai na ek pie*" ("Not a recruit, not a pie"). The satyagraha was meant to claim the freedom to preach and practise what we believed in. We wanted to

establish our claim to that right by expressing opposition to the war effort even during a critical phase of the war.

Some opposed this satyagraha while others made fun of it. Left-wingers laughed and said that this kind of action could not benefit anyone and that we could hardly expect to impress the British Government. Some insinuated that it was only a self-delusion to claim that the satyagraha was aimed at securing freedom of expression because it was actually intended to oppose the war effort but lacked the courage to say so openly. All these critics were off the mark. What we wanted was to demonstrate to the world that we were not with the British in this so-called war for the freedom of humanity, and we wished to do so without unnecessary fuss. Collective satyagraha was impossible without a serious conflict with the Government at this critical juncture. It was a satyagraha by individuals but it was offered on behalf of the country as a whole and thus had a collective basis.

In Bihar, as I had been advised against joining the movement because of my ill-health, the onus of inaugurating the satyagraha fell on Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha. It was decided that, on the first day, Dr. Sinha would offer satyagrah at the Bankipore Maidan and he would be followed immediately by Anugrah Narain Sinha. When Dr. Sinha came to the Maidan, a large crowd of people, particularly students, had gathered there. There was a noisy demonstration which did not cease till he had been arrested and taken to jail. I felt that the demonstrators had all gone against the instructions of Gandhiji and that if such demonstrations were not discouraged the situation would get out of control and the people would no longer be amenable to discipline. I, therefore, asked Anugrah Narain not to offer satyagraha and postponed the movement in the province till the people agreed to obey Gandhiji's directions to the letter. The next day, people came to me in crowds and assured me that such demonstrations would not be repeated and that if the satyagraha were to be called off it would sully the fair name of Bihar. Sensing an improvement in the atmosphere, I permitted the resumption after a couple of days. The result was peaceful satyagraha.

Congress ministries having resigned, the Governors took over the administrations of the provinces under Section 93

of the Government of India Act. For some time they waited in the hope that the Congress might return to office, but when they were convinced that this was not possible, they stopped the allowances of the M.L.A.s. The salaries of the Speakers were also withheld but their personal orderlies and peons continued to attend on them. In the local bodies, the Congress had not asked the members to resign. A number of Congressmen were Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen in these bodies and when some of them vacated their positions, opportunists seized them. In some places, where fresh elections were held, Congressmen were not nominated for the contest but the Congress made the mistake of nominating outsiders who happened to be opportunists to fill the vacancies, believing that they would be amenable to Congress discipline. In some places, Congressmen got themselves re-elected on their own. All this led to an inevitable relaxation of discipline in the local bodies. Complaints and counter-complaints became the order of the day and dissensions in the organisation appeared on the surface. This brought a bad name to our organisation.

In Bihar, the entire responsibility of keeping discipline in the organisation was mine, but I was not able to devote my whole time to it since I was mostly in Wardha. Maulana Azad having courted imprisonment, the responsibilities of President devolved on Gandhiji and he insisted that Acharya Kripalani, General Secretary of the Congress, who had been deliberately kept out of the movement, and I should remain with him (Gandhiji) to assist him in his task. I, therefore, set up a small committee in November 1941 to keep an eye on the activities of Congressmen in the local bodies. Despite all precautions, things did not improve and I decided that Congressmen should be withdrawn from the local bodies. But since some prominent Bihar leaders were just then about to be released I awaited their return. After consultation with them, instructions were issued for the withdrawal of all Congressmen from local bodies. But, according to reports I received in Wardha, while a majority of Congressmen complied with my instructions, some did not. Disciplinary action was, therefore, taken against them by the provincial and district Congress committees.

While in Wardha, H. C. Dasappa, of the Mysore Congress Committee, requested Gandhiji to persuade me to visit Mysore to inaugurate their annual political conference. Gandhiji acceded and asked me to proceed to Mysore. I accompanied Dasappa to Harihar, on the banks of the Tungabhadra, where the conference was held. After the conference was over, Dasappa took me round on a sight-seeing trip.

After visiting Bangalore and Mysore, we went to Shravan Belgola and Halebid to see their ancient temples, some of the finest specimens of Jain and Hindu architecture. These two are among those places in the world which no one should miss. The huge monolithic statue of Mahavira hewn from a rock on the top of a mountain near Halebid is visible from a distance of 15 miles all round. Rocks around the site have been removed to afford an unimpeded view to people from afar. This place is a great centre of pilgrimage for Jains from all over the country.

The Halebid specimens of architecture were exquisite. I saw carvings on the temple walls depicting scenes from the Puranas. One piece of workmanship particularly impressed me. It was a figure in relief on a wall, with a bouquet of flowers in one hand. On a petal was a bee, carved from the same piece of stone as that which went to make the figure and the bouquet. From a distance, the stone bee looked like a real one. This difficult piece of workmanship reminded me of the chains carved in stone which I had seen in South Indian temples. There was another stone idol carved on a high wall there, wearing a number of ornaments carved out of the same stone. The face carried a nose ring passing through a tiny hole in the nose. The ring was no more than half an inch thick and one could rotate it freely!

At Gersappa, where Mysore and Madras meet, Nature spread herself before us to provide a feast for our eyes. The waterfalls are a magnificent spectacle. Water falls from a height of one thousand feet and can be seen from two sides. I sat there for a long time, completely enraptured. A hydro-electric project was then under construction and a large number of workers were about. How far would the work of the human hand desecrate that spot of beauty, I wondered. The Government has made excellent arrangements for the stay of holiday makers.

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Bihar Sharif Riots

I RETURNED to Patna from Mysore and after a few days' stay left for Wardha. When I was just about to entrain I learnt of the Hindu-Muslim tension in Bihar Sharif but I never imagined that it would result in anything serious. On arrival at Wardha I saw newspaper headlines on the outbreak of riots in Bihar Sharif. I received a telegram the same day speaking of terrible happenings. Gandhiji wanted me to go back to Bihar immediately, so I took the first train to Patna. I learnt that Shah Mohammed Uzair Munimi and Mathura Prasad, my secretary, had already rushed to Bihar Sharif. I also learnt that the riots were spreading to neighbouring villages and that many members of both the communities had been killed. I was reminded of the riots that broke out in 1918 in Shahabad and spread to other parts of the district and was anxious lest history repeat itself.

I, therefore, decided to go at once to Bihar Sharif. Fortunately, Abdul Bari arrived in Patna the same day and he consented to accompany me. We engaged a couple of motor lorries and, with a batch of teachers and students of Bihar Vidyapith and some other workers, left for the place. Munimi and Mathura Prasad apprised us of the situation, which showed signs of improvement. The Government had despatched a strong police force to restore order, and the District Magistrate, the Commissioner of Police and other senior officers were already on the spot. Munimi and Mathura Prasad had rushed to every spot when violence had broken out and, at great personal risk, appealed to people to desist from violence.

I made a tour of the affected areas and I saw heart-rending scenes. I was deeply pained by the aggressive mood of both Hindus and Muslims, who forgot their religion and humanity. Though both the communities had suffered, the Muslim toll was heavier. I divided our workers in batches and sent them to the neighbouring villages which were reported to have been affected. They toured the area, contradicting baseless rumours and creating confidence among the people. In a

few days, the situation improved considerably. I met Mohammed Ismail, President of the Bihar Muslim League, and had talks with him. For a day we both returned to Patna where we addressed a public meeting. Then back in Bihar Sharif I went about consoling the victims of riots and pacifying incensed men. After peace was restored, I left for Wardha.

At this time, Walchand Hirachand and Shanti Kumar Narottam Morarji, directors of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company, an Indian shipping firm which plied its vessels along the coast and between India and Burma, came to Wardha and told Gandhiji that they would like me to go to Visakhapatnam to lay the foundation-stone for their ship-building yard there. They spoke to Gandhiji because during that period I did not undertake any task without consulting him. Gandhiji approved of the idea and advised me to go. At Visakhapatnam, with the help of the material placed at my disposal by the directors, I made a thorough study of the history of the Indian Mercantile Marine. Though I had known a little about how the British had come to monopolise the shipping serving both India's coastal and foreign trade, it was in Visakhapatnam that I acquired fuller knowledge of the subject. The laying of the foundation-stone for the ship-building yard was an occasion for great rejoicing and Scindias celebrated it with great pomp and ceremony. At the function, at which prominent men from all over the country were present, I surveyed the history of the Indian Mercantile Marine. The directors placed some money at my disposal and, in consultation with them, I made donations to various public causes. I was also the recipient of innumerable presents.

Then, accompanied by Mathura Prasad, I left for Calcutta on my way to Dacca, where Hindu-Muslim riots had broken out and had spread to the countryside. Villages had been looted and burnt down and there had been a great deal of bloodshed in Dacca town. I met Fazlul Huq, Chief Minister of Bengal, and Khwaja Nazimuddin, Home Minister. I had known Fazlul Huq since I had started practising at the Calcutta High Court and I had met Nazimuddin in connection with the hunger-strike of political prisoners in Bengal jails.

It was all quiet on the day I reached Dacca. The Hindus had suffered terribly and were very much agitated. I stayed at

the residence of Shirish Chander Chatterji, a veteran Congressman and President of the District Congress Committee. The Muslims of Dacca invited me to tea at the residence of the Nawab of Dacca, and we had long talks on the situation and on the steps necessary to restore peace. I visited the villages nearby which had been looted and burnt down. They presented a piteous sight. Most of the houses in Bengal are made of bamboo and straw matting and wooden pillars; the floors are plastered with cement to provide protection against dampness. In some of the villages, one could see nothing but charred stumps of wooden pillars and cement floors to remind one that there had once been human habitation on the spot. There could hardly be any comparison between what happened in these villages and what had happened in Bihar Sharif. In Bihar Sharif, where Hindus are in a majority, most of the deaths were among Muslims, while in Dacca, where the Muslims are in a majority, most of the victims were Hindus. But Bihar Sharif could not compare with Dacca in the matter of arson and looting. After touring the countryside for two or three days, I returned to Dacca.

When I reached Dacca after my tour of the countryside, I learnt that the Government had set up an inquiry committee and that my old intimate friend, Jogendra Narain Majumdar, the Standing Counsel to the Bengal Government, had been sent to Dacca to represent the Government. When I called on Majumdar, who was staying in a steamer anchored in the river Hooghly, we got the news that riots had broken out again in the town and that two persons had been stabbed. Trouble continued the whole night and by the next morning the situation had got out of hand and many had been stabbed to death. The situation had deteriorated to such an extent that every time a member of one community was killed it avenged itself for its loss by killing a member of the other community. While the culprits always managed to escape, innocent people paid with their lives. In these circumstances, it was impossible to continue the work of investigation and so it was postponed. Majumdar decided to leave and we both travelled by the same boat to Calcutta. From Calcutta I went to Patna. On the way I developed fever and cough. With the setting in of the rainy season, my health further deteriorated

and I was confined to bed for two months. As soon as I recovered I left for Wardha.

In a riot-affected village in Bengal, during my tour, I was surprised to meet two men who hailed from Zeradei. Like so many Biharis they had gone there for employment. There were a large number of Biharis in Bengal as well as in Assam. The adventurous spirit of uneducated Biharis is in sharp contrast to that of the ease-loving, educated Biharis. Very few educated people like to leave their province, while the unlettered rural folk can be seen anywhere from Bombay to Burma and in Assam and Bengal. I wonder if it is the English education which has made our people so lazy and ease-loving.

These poor Biharis, who do manual labour in Burma and far-flung provinces of India, do not perk their noses at anything. They work in the fields, build roads, dig wells and tanks, construct houses, drive bullock carts and work as bearers and watchmen in the houses of the rich. They remit quite a good sum back to Bihar. In Zeradei alone, the weekly remittances received amounted to Rs. 4,000-Rs. 5,000. It is estimated that, on an average, Bihar gets about Rs. 5 crores a year from outside. Some Bengali friends told me that the Biharis' complaint that too many Bengalis came to their province to make a living made little sense because a large number of Biharis also sought employment in Bengal. It is a fact that the complaints were made by Biharis, especially the educated who bore the brunt of the competition with Bengalis in Government offices and at the Bar. It is difficult to assess whether Biharis get more out of Bengal or Bengal out of Bihar since Bengalis employed in Government offices, as teachers in schools and colleges, as advocates and as doctors do not remit money home by money order as the poor Biharis do. It must be said, however, that the jobs that Biharis do are of an essential nature, without which it would be difficult for the Bengalis to carry on in their day-to-day life, while the Bengalis take soft jobs which the Biharis can themselves perform. The Biharis also said that the total income of the Bengalis from comfortable office jobs was equal to what many hard-working Biharis managed to earn by the sweat of their brow in malaria-ridden areas of Bengal. There had, thus, been some tension between the two provinces on this matter.

The question became a bone of contention when the Congress Ministry was formed in Bihar. The Biharis complained that even after 30 years of separation of Bihar from Bengal, Bengalis had a predominant share in Government services as they used to have in undivided Bengal. The Bengalis replied that most of their compatriots in Bihar were domiciled residents and although they spoke Bengali, they must be looked upon as Biharis and there should be no discrimination against them in Government services. They alleged that Bengali-speaking Biharis were being discriminated against. When these complaints reached the Congress High Command when Subhas Bose was President, he asked me to look into them. I made a thorough inquiry and, in a long report, giving the historical background to the dispute, made constructive proposals for ensuring justice and fair play. The Working Committee accepted my recommendations and advised the Bihar Ministry to implement them. Though I had not accepted all the demands made by the parties, my recommendations were acceptable to the disputants.

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Cripps Offer

I WAS in Dacca when, on June 22, 1941, Hitler invaded Russia. By now, barring Sweden in the north and Italy and Spain in the south, Germany was the overlord of the whole of Europe. The whole of North Africa up to the borders of Egypt was under Nazi occupation. The Allies made common cause with Russia. The United States of America, barring direct entry into the conflict, helped the Allies with armaments and other equipment on credit. But soon she was also drawn into the war when, in December 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbour. Japan made lightning attacks against the British, American and Dutch possessions in the Pacific and invaded Malaya and quickly overran that colony and dug deep into Burma. America joined in the war and directed her whole strength to the war effort. Britain feared an eventual union of the forces of Germany and Japan. She was fighting furiously in North Africa against German troops. Along with Russia, she had neutralised Iran. India had soon to be on guard against the onslaught of Japan along the Burma border. Taking a lesson from what had happened in Malaya and was happening in Burma, where one reason for the quick collapse of the British resistance was the utter indifference of the subject peoples, Britain wanted to prevent a repetition of those debacles. Further, the United States was constantly prodding her to come to a settlement with India.

It was in these circumstances that Britain thought it would be to her benefit if she reached some understanding with India, and Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in India on March 23, 1942 with a plan in his pocket. Sir Stafford was then Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons in the National Government of Churchill. A man of radical views, he had to leave even the Labour Party some time after the outbreak of the war. Churchill sent him to Russia as Ambassador and, during the crucial period before Hitler's attack on Russia, he carried on delicate negotiations with the Kremlin for an understanding with Britain. The success of his efforts, which

culminated in Anglo-Russian amity after Hitler's attack, enhanced his reputation for exceptional ability as a negotiator. It was he who pressed Churchill to come to an agreement with India and the British Government, which was a composite one, with representatives of the Conservative and Labour parties, prepared a plan and sent it to India through Sir Stafford Cripps.

The plan was a closely-guarded secret and nothing more was said than that it was of the utmost importance to India. Immediately after his arrival, Sir Stafford began a series of meetings with Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress President, Maulana Azad, and other leaders. A few days later, the plan was released to the press. A meeting of the Working Committee was called at Delhi to consider it. Most of us stayed in Delhi for more than two weeks during the negotiations. But Gandhiji had to leave for Sewagram after a few days owing to the illness of his wife, Kasturba. Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru represented the Congress at the talks with Cripps and at nights discussed the progress of the negotiations with the members of the Committee.

The Cripps Plan could be divided into two parts. The first dealt with the method of drawing up the future Constitution of India while the second promised immediate reorganisation of the Viceroy's Executive Council. The Plan made an unequivocal assurance that, after the war, India would be given the same status as the other Dominions and that she would be free to remain in or secede from the Commonwealth. The framing of the Constitution for the Federation of India was to be entrusted to a Constituent Assembly formed by members elected by the provincial legislative assemblies. The provinces were free to remain in or secede from the Federation, and the British Government would have the same connection with the seceding province or provinces as with the rest of India. The Plan thus conceded the Muslim League's demand of Pakistan. As for the immediate changes, it was not explained what powers the Viceroy's Executive Council would have but it was merely stated that the Executive Council would have no right in matters relating to the armed forces and the war effort. This implied that the Council would have within its jurisdiction all the other departments of the

Government. This interpretation was later confirmed by Cripps.

Gandhiji was not satisfied with the Cripps Plan and said so plainly at the time of his interview with Cripps. The Working Committee too did not think much of it, nevertheless it considered the Plan in great detail. It did not want to agree to the part conceding Pakistan though it agreed that to compel a province to remain within the Indian Federation against its wishes was incompatible with the principle of self-determination. It was the immediate changes proposed in the Plan which claimed the Working Committee's attention most. The Working Committee felt that as the Viceroy's Executive Council would have to bear the brunt of the war effort, if the Council had no say in matters concerning defence and the war, its position would certainly be altogether untenable. Therefore, the Committee asked for a detailed clarification whether the Executive Council would have anything to do with the armed forces and the war effort or whether all the powers would be concentrated in the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief. Sir Stafford agreed to concede limited power for the Executive Council over the war effort and the army, but when asked further to define those powers, it transpired from his replies that they were just nominal and that all real powers would vest in the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief.

It had been said that the Executive Council would be supreme in all other departments and that the Viceroy would be acting in consultation with his Councillors in every matter, but it was clear that, while the war was on, the departments of the Government other than War and Defence would become just subsidiary. With the important Departments of War and Defence out of our hands, the retention of other departments with us would mean nothing. The Working Committee, therefore, after prolonged discussions, decided to reject the plan. Sir Stafford wanted us to make our decision public so that he could negotiate with the British Cabinet and see how far the Congress point of view could be accommodated. After some negotiation with the British Government, he agreed to give some limited powers to Indian Councillors over the Departments of War and Defence. This, however, did not

satisfy the Working Committee and it had no alternative to rejecting the Plan.

At this juncture, Col. Johnson, a personal envoy of President Roosevelt, arrived in India and met Jawaharlal Nehru. Col. Johnson asked for some respite so that he might try for an understanding with the British. His efforts resulted in further clarification of the powers to be retained with the Commander-in-Chief and those to be transferred to the Indian Executive Councillors. The British Government adopted a resolution which detailed a list of subjects to be reserved and subjects to be transferred. It sounded all right but the question was which of the transferred subjects would be really of interest to us. The result of the clarification was that our rights and powers were to be exactly as indicated in the earlier resolution of the British Government adopted at Cripps's instance. It thus became clear that the subsequent offer had no substance in it and was mere jugglery with words.

Even when we were inclined to consider the transfer of the departments other than Defence and inquired about the nature of the Councillors' powers, Sir Stafford could give us no assurance but merely referred us to the Viceroy, because the Executive Councillors would be working under him and, as the Constitution was not to be changed, the Viceroy alone could say what powers could be delegated to his Councillors according to the then Constitution. When we demanded that the British Government should direct the Viceroy not to use the special powers but to act on the advice of his Councillors, we were told that the Government could not do that. We knew full well then that the Viceroy would never care for his Councillors and never intended to delegate any powers to them.

When it became clear that even in the case of the so-called transferred departments real power was not to be transferred to our hands, the Working Committee was compelled to adopt a resolution rejecting the Cripps Plan. Sir Stafford announced the same day that the Plan that he had brought with him was now withdrawn and that he was returning to England. The Muslim League, which was waiting to see how the Congress would react to the Plan, also rejected it as soon as the Working Committee's resolution saw the light of day. The League said that the Plan only conceded the possibility of

Pakistan and not Pakistan itself and that, therefore, it was rejecting the Plan.

The Congress was not satisfied with that part of the Plan which dealt with the future set-up because, though it did not want the unwilling provinces to be retained in the Federation, it was not right to concede Pakistan even by implication and its creation, if necessary, should have been left to be decided later, when the time arrived. But the immediate reason for its rejection of the Cripps Plan was that the Plan did not contemplate any transfer of real power immediately into Indian hands while it expected Indians to render all possible help to the war effort, which, in effect, would have meant that the Indian Councillors would doing little more than collecting money for the War Fund and helping the recruitment campaign.

C. Rajagopalachari, alone of the Working Committee, was first in favour of accepting the Cripps Plan, because he felt that, except for Defence and War, Indians would have full power in all other departments. But even his opposition to our stand melted away when it became clear that the Viceroy was not willing to relax his special powers. As we came to know later, there was some misunderstanding among the people on the Working Committee's resolution, but our stand was clear. We were sorry that, in his last statement, Cripps said that the Plan had been rejected because of Hindu-Muslim differences. The charge was completely baseless because the stage for discussion on the composition of the Viceroy's Executive Council, when there could have been differences on Hindu-Muslim representation, was never reached. The talks broke down on the simple issue of immediate transfer of real power into the hands of Indian Councillors. We never for a moment thought in terms of Hindu and Muslim representation in the Executive Council.

We had now to take the matter to the A.-I.C.C. where a positive decision would have to be taken on the future policy of the Congress. The Japanese were advancing fast and the British forces were unable to check them. Large contingents of British and American forces and the latest armaments were being rushed to India, but India was not fully prepared to meet the menace. The question before us was whether, if and

when the Japanese entered India, we should bow before the aggressor or oppose him. In a way, during the discussions on the Cripps Plan, the Working Committee had given up Gandhiji's policy of non-violence and signified its willingness to fight the Japanese forces alongside the British, and it meant what it said. But it could do so only if the British accepted Indians as equal partners. Though the British, responsible for the defence of the country, were unequal to the task, they were unwilling to relax their hold on India.

Churchill had repeatedly announced that while Britain did not want to bring any new country or territory under her occupation, she was equally determined, in spite of her adversity, not to withdraw from any of her existing possessions. At a most critical juncture of the war, he had proposed a union of Britain and France — a union of two empires consisting of territories over which the two nations had fought and shed each other's blood for centuries. But he could not countenance India as an equal partner. He was not willing to concede equality to Indians even to enable them to fight the Japanese.

We had, therefore, to decide as to how to defend ourselves. Loss of courage and confidence by the people would only facilitate a quick Japanese occupation of the country. Perhaps, there was a section of people who were indifferent to the Japanese occupation of the country, if in that process the British were driven away from here. They thought that somehow they would be able to deal with Japan later and so did not see any harm in even seeking Japan's help to drive the British out. But in Congress circles and in the Working Committee, there was not one voice which spoke for either remaining neutral or colluding with Japan. We positively abhorred the Japanese who had invaded China and occupied a large part of her territory. Japan was as anxious to build an empire as Britain was to retain it. We certainly did not want to release ourselves from the slavery under the British to go into bondage under the Japanese. The British Government having rejected our aid in fighting the Japanese enemy, despite our deviation from the principle of non-violence, we had no alternative but to fight the Japanese in our own way, which was merely to instil courage and confidence in the people. Was it possible for

the country to fight a new aggressor when it had failed to liquidate British imperialism or had been unwilling to do anything against it? In these circumstances, we thought that the best way to meet the danger was to enkindle the flame of freedom and patriotism in the heart of every Indian.

Such a campaign meant rousing opposition both to Japan and to Britain but the British could not blame us. They had asked for it. Their refusal to give us even the limited freedom that we were ready to be content with could hardly make us draw any distinction between the British and the Japanese. The one deprived us of our independence while the other wanted to displace the first and establish a new empire in India. There was nothing to choose between the two. To all intents and purposes, the British were to give us Dominion Status after the successful conclusion of the war. But the Japanese also promised to make us free if we helped them to oust the British from Asian soil. Whom were we to trust? We decided to trust neither and to prepare ourselves as best as we could to win and assert our freedom, irrespective of the attitude of the British.

Gandhiji set himself to writing spirited articles in the *Harijan*. He prepared a draft resolution for the A.-I.C.C. which was to meet in Allahabad and sent it through Miraben. When the Working Committee took up the discussion of the resolution, differences were evident. One section supported the resolution while another of my way of thinking voiced its opposition. An effort was made to amend the resolution but with no success. Eventually, in the interest of unanimity, we withdrew our opposition and let the resolution be adopted in the form the others desired. When the A.-I.C.C. met, it was clear that the country was behind the Mahatma. If his resolution were placed before the A.-I.C.C. its passage was assured but any discussion on it would have exposed our internal differences to the public. We, therefore, decided to draw the curtain on the differences and, keeping back the Mahatma's resolution, moved another instead, which nevertheless had much in common with Gandhiji's. When he later saw it, he said that although he did not wholly like it, he accepted it as it provided sufficient room for him to work in the Congress.

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Japanese Threat

FROM Allahabad I returned to Patna after seeing Gandhiji at Wardha. It appeared to me that we were heading for a clash with the British. There was discontent everywhere in the country. Gandhiji's writings became more and more pungent. I decided to tour Bihar to apprise the people of Gandhiji's views and also to prepare them for the coming crisis. It was necessary to hearten the people who were terror-stricken by the unhindered advance of the Japanese. I had to tell them what they had to do in case the Japanese forces crossed our borders.

Just then an incident occurred for which, I am afraid, I was responsible. At the Working Committee meeting at Allahabad, I had tried to amend Gandhiji's draft resolution. When I left Allahabad, I had forgotten to take with me the sheet on which I had noted down the amendments and remembered it only after I had left for Wardha. I wrote to the Congress Office to send that paper to me to Wardha immediately since Gandhiji might want to see it, but I never got any reply and, thinking that my letter had not been received at Allahabad, I left for Patna. But later I heard of a police raid on Swaraj Bhawan where a search was made of the offices and a copy of Gandhiji's resolution and the minutes of the last Working Committee meeting taken away. Then I came to know that the police had intercepted my letter which had given the clue to the existence of Gandhiji's resolution and led to the raid. This material was fully made use of by the Home Member, Sir Richard Tottenham, in his booklet brought out in the wake of the August disturbances. The conviction grew in my mind that we were in for a conflict with the Government.

The authorities were behaving in a thoughtless and dictatorial fashion. They began making preparations on the coastal areas where they feared landings by the Japanese and in an effort to deny the invader the use of landing craft, they began to seize the boats and countrycraft of the villagers on the coasts.

In Bengal especially, orders were given to destroy all country-craft. The village folk who depended on their boats for the transport of merchandise and for their very living were ruined. Rural life in some areas of Bengal was completely paralysed. This was the beginning of a foolish scorched earth policy which the Government was trying to adopt. The Government also took possession of the stocks of paddy and rice in the villages to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy.

Preparations were made in Bihar, from Chota Nagpur up to the Sone river, to establish a new front. Airstrips and roads were built at several places. For these projects the Government began taking over thousands of acres of cultivable land, to the great hardship of the peasants. They were promised adequate compensation for the houses and the land that had been acquired by the Government, but nothing was paid to them later. Heavy contingents of British and American troops were pouring into North Bihar and Chota Nagpur, which became one vast military camp. As the war had come to the border of Assam and the railways were mostly being used for the transport of defence forces, accommodation in trains became scarce. The heaviest pressure was on the Oudh-Tirhut Railway (now North-Eastern Railway), which connects Assam and North Bihar to Oudh, the trains carrying reinforcements to the front and bringing the wounded for treatment somewhere in North India. People from the coast began to flee to Bihar, the U.P. and further westwards. This voluntary evacuation resulted in a sense of great insecurity among the masses. Efforts were made to build new roads, set up rest houses and provide food and drinking water for the fleeing people. This was some relief to the people, but there was a feeling of inevitability in the air. It appeared as if, however determined the resistance to the enemy might be, the stage was set for a hurried retreat.

The result of all this was confusion and fear in the country. To counteract it I decided to tour the whole of Bihar. My health was no longer good enough to allow me to make eight to ten speeches a day. Therefore, I decided to limit my programme and visit only one or two places in each district, and address public meetings and Congress workers. There was a great shortage of cloth and food grains and I decided to

meet the merchants and devise some measures to overcome it. With a well-planned programme, I set out on my tour in the last week of April and completed it by the end of June, 1942.

I told my audiences of an impending struggle with the Government. I told them that the time had not come for a definite programme yet but that that a clash was ahead was definite. The agitation would be some sort of a civil disobedience, a non-violent struggle, but more forceful and intense than any we had so far been engaged in. The Japanese were carrying on persistent propaganda over Tokyo Radio of their efforts to free India from the bondage of the British. In my speeches I warned the people against placing any trust in the words of the Japanese and reminded them of the atrocities perpetrated in China by Japan. We would not like to free ourselves from the British only to walk into the parlour of the Japanese. I said that our struggle would be against both the imperialist Powers. I realised, and I am sure my audience also felt, that unlike former times when I always preached peace and moderation, my speeches on this occasion were fiery.

This reminds me of an incident at a public meeting in Patna when the 1930 satyagraha had just begun. The youth of the town had got somewhat excited and made inflammatory speeches. When, asked to speak on the occasion, I got up, some young men murmured that I could be depended upon to pour cold water over the popular enthusiasm. Having overheard their remark, I said that if popular enthusiasm remained intact in spite of my cold douche, I would consider their enthusiasm to be genuine and healthy, otherwise their zeal would only be like a sick man's fever and their demonstration would be just the wails of an ailing person.

This time nothing was farther from my mind than administering a cold douche. My speeches, on the other hand, were intended to infuse courage and determination into the people. I did not lose sight of the constructive programme and appealed to the people and the merchants to help in relieving the cloth and food shortage. Had the Government cared for the people's co-operation and acted in a more considerate manner, these shortages would not have caused the crisis they actually did. I told the people, therefore, that they should help themselves.

The object of my speeches was not to incite the people against the Government but to prepare the people to make a stand against the Japanese and towards that end, since the authorities had not allowed them an opportunity to mobilise against the threat, to act without looking for assistance from the Government.

Aerodromes and military quarters were springing up everywhere and the Government had to acquire more and more land. When I went to Gaya, a big deputation waited on me and poured out its tale of woe. They were peasants and landlords whose lands and houses had been taken over by the Government for enlarging an aerodrome which was already in use. The promised compensation had not been paid to them. They were undoubtedly in pitiable straits. I found Gaya a beehive of activity. The aerodrome was being enlarged, more landing grounds were being built, fleets of motor trucks were carrying material to the aerodrome and thousands of labourers were at work. On the other hand, several villages had been evacuated and some more were in the process of evacuation. Homeless and landless people wandered aimlessly, with no one to care for them. Here was inflammable material in our hands and no better opportunity could have offered itself had our object been to impede the administration in its war effort. On the other hand, I told those people that, in the interest of the defence of the country, the Government could not but acquire their land and that, provided they received adequate compensation for it so that they could settle down elsewhere, they should not obstruct the process. I promised to help them in getting compensation from the Government, though I was not sure if the Government would listen to me.

When I returned to Patna I wrote a letter to the Adviser to the Government giving the details of persons involved in the land acquisition in Gaya and making suggestions for an equitable compensation. Since there was often bungling in the distribution of the compensation amounts, I suggested that the distribution should be made in the presence of Congressmen. Apart from the lands acquired for the construction of airstrips and buildings, most of the land was just to be levelled for landing grounds or camps. I suggested to the Adviser that, when the emergency was over, such lands should

be returned to the original owners in a condition in which the kisans could use them for cultivation. Compensation should be paid for what a kisan's land would have yielded during the period it was taken away from him. For lands on which buildings were to be raised and so could not be returned, the kisans should receive their full price and also the full value of the houses which were being demolished. The Government took immediate action on my letter. I received a reply from the Commissioner of Patna Division, who fully agreed with me on my appraisal of the complicated problem of compensation.

A similar situation obtained in Manbhum when I visited that district. The Collector of the district reacted as the Commissioner of Patna Division did. I am dilating on this matter because, when the August 1942 disturbances began, the Government levelled false charges against us that we wanted to help Japan and harass the British Government in all possible ways. Later, however, the Government withdrew the charges as baseless, but our Muslim League friends never ceased voicing such allegations in and out of season.

After completion of my tour, I left for Wardha to attend the meetings of the All-India Charkha Sangh and the Congress Working Committee. The Charkha Sangh met first and took up the question of expanding the khadi industry. As most of the mills were busy producing cloth for the defence forces, the people were being denied their requirements. We decided therefore to meet this situation by producing more handloom cloth. We decided to expand the activities of the Charkha Sangh and organise it on a large scale. Then the Working Committee met, its discussions on its next programme lasting several days.

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Quit India Resolution

At the Working Committee discussions, the proposal to launch a satyagraha movement was opposed by some. Dr. Syed Mahmud was one of them. The discussions were prolonged but the Committee could not arrive at any decision. I was worried over this indecision and requested Gandhiji to advise us about the programme we should follow. He blankly refused to do anything till we had definitely resolved to launch satyagraha, when alone he would be able to work out a plan. At the moment, the Working Committee was not of one view and how the Government would react to its decision could not be anticipated. In such a state of uncertainty, he said he would not be able to help the Congress. The satyagraha, he said, was going to be extremely vigorous. It would not merely consist in courting imprisonment but would involve greater sacrifices. Possibly, all our personal belongings and household effects would have to be staked. It was very likely that the Charkha Sangh's entire property, of the value of about Rs. 40 lakhs, and all its workers would have to be sacrificed, though we had only a few days earlier decided to expand the Sangh's activities. It was thus necessary to get a clear picture of the situation before drawing up a plan for the movement. We all felt that this uncertainty was a great weakness, but we had to accept it because after all the programme had to be drawn up by Gandhiji and he was not able to do so at that stage. Eventually, it was decided that the Working Committee should meet in Bombay early in August to take the final decision in the matter.

Before leaving Wardha I called on Gandhiji to take his leave. I found him surrounded by some friends who put to him the question whether cutting telegraph wires and dismantling railway lines could be considered compatible with non-violence. I knew that this question had been uppermost in the minds of a few Congressmen ever since the talk of satyagraha began. I immediately told Gandhiji that during the 1930 agitation when Gandhiji and many other leaders

had been jailed and Pandit Motilal Nehru was acting as President and I had gone to Allahabad to attend a meeting of the Congress Working Committee, people had raised the same question and, in fact, had actually cut telephone and telegraph wires in a few places, but it was stopped as we discouraged the practice. I was not, therefore, surprised that the same question should be raised again and suggested that Gandhiji should give us clear instructions about it while formulating his programme.

Gandhiji replied that the question of non-violence or violence did not arise in respect of cutting steel or wood, which we did so often in our daily lives. But it was a different thing altogether to cut telegraph and telephone wires and to remove rails or fishplates. Whether a particular act was violent or non-violent depended on the motives behind that act, the manner in which it was executed and the results flowing from it. If as a result of it people died and the innocent were made to suffer, it would constitute violence, but we could also imagine a situation in which the act would be non-violent.

We interpreted his views to mean that the violence or non-violence of an act would be determined by the fact whether it endangered anyone's life and the doer acknowledged full responsibility for his act so that others did not suffer for it. But all this was casual talk. The programme had not been decided nor was it likely to be decided till the A.-I.C.C. met in Bombay in August. Despite this, the Government later accused the Congress of disrupting communications as a part of the satyagraha programme. Gandhiji replied that the Government had mistaken a theoretical discussion of a programme for the programme itself, and Gandhiji was perfectly correct.

On the way to Patna, I got down at Gondia where I addressed a meeting. Then I went to Banaras where a meeting of the Bharatiya Itihas Parishad (Indian Historical Congress) had been called. With the satyagraha round the corner, I wanted to complete some work I had undertaken to do for the Parishad. The Parishad had entrusted the work of writing on various topics in Indian history to certain scholars. A volume on Akbar was almost ready and it was to be published to synchronise with the commemoration of his 400th birth

anniversary which fell that year. But the Parishad was encountering difficulties: there was shortage of paper, and reference works were not available since libraries in Madras and Calcutta possessing them had been shifted for protection against Japanese bombing. Jai Chandra Vidyalankar, the moving spirit of the Parishad, had wanted to consult me on these things. I had collected some funds for the Parishad in Gondia and I now deposited them at the Parishad office and had a talk with Jai Chandra about the arrangements for printing the volume on Akbar and some more volumes which were also almost completed.

Then I left for Tarapur, in Monghyr district, where was held a kisan conference, which had been put off several times before because of my inability to attend it. Acharya Kripalani inaugurated the conference and Krishna Ballabh Sahay presided over it. Dr. S. K. Sinha, Anugrah Narain Sinha and other prominent Bihar leaders were present. On my arrival at the place I had an attack of asthma. However, I attended the conference. When I was asked to speak and I rose to do so, down came the rain and the conference was washed out just like the Ramgarh session of the Congress. After spending the night there, I left for Patna the next morning. My asthma grew more serious and I also developed temperature. Even during the Working Committee meetings at Wardha I had an attack, but somehow I had managed to be present throughout the deliberations. Now the crucial session of the A.-I.C.C. was only two weeks off and I was anxious that I should recover by then.

I convened a meeting of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee at Sadaqat Ashram on July 31 to sound Congressmen on the proposed satyagraha to be discussed in Bombay. Despite my illness and consequent weakness, I addressed the meeting and made a forceful speech. I apprised the meeting of the discussions in Wardha and made the people realise what to expect from the forthcoming struggle and how it was of the utmost importance to the country. A day or two after the meeting, Bihar members of the A.-I.C.C. left for Bombay, but my ill health kept me back in Patna.

The newspapers of the times talked of the Government's determination and preparation to arrest all the leaders at

the time of the A.-I.C.C. meeting in Bombay with a view to suppressing the agitation at the very start. Rumours were also afloat in Bihar of a move to arrest the leaders in the province and it was said that the Camp Jail, which was out of use just then, was being hurriedly got ready for our reception. If these reports turned out to be correct, I was afraid that the people would be left without a programme and so I thought that I should formulate some programme at least for my province. I was reminded of what Gandhiji had told us earlier that in case all leaders were arrested and no programme had been imparted to the people, every Congressman should look upon himself as a leader and, consistent with the principles of Ahimsa, decide on his own plan of satyagraha and carry it to its final consummation as this was to be the last phase of our freedom struggle. Not being strong enough to sit down and write, I called Deepnarain Sinha and Mathura Prasad, detailed my proposals and asked them to prepare a draft on those lines. When they had completed it, along with Anugrah Narain Sinha, who had not gone to Bombay, I went over it and made some amendments. Then the amended draft was sent for printing. I told my friends that should all the prominent Congressmen be arrested and the A.-I.C.C. programme not reach the people, the programme outlined in my draft should be followed in the province. The programme of action, based on non-violence, which I laid down in my plan was not very different from the programme of earlier campaigns but it was now more intense.

Meanwhile, a contrary report emanating from Delhi said that the Government would not take any action against the Congress on August 8 or earlier but wait and see what the Congress did later. On the Congress side, it was said that before taking the next step Gandhiji would like to meet the Viceroy and a movement would be launched only if the talks floundered. I was inclined to accept the news as likely to be true and thought that there would be no immediate hurry to publicise my programme. I decided to await the return from Bombay of the Bihar Congressmen who were expected on August 11, before taking the next step. In view of this decision, Anugrah Narain left for Rae Bareli to see his ailing brother and Deepnarain for Muzaffarpur to fulfil a prior

engagement. Mathura Prasad and Chakradhar Saran stayed with me in Sadaqat Ashram.

At the crucial meeting of the A.-I.C.C. in Bombay, Gandhiji made a long speech in which he gave his message of " Do or Die " to the people. He also said that he would try to meet the Viceroy once again and make an effort at compromise. Sardar Patel made a fighting speech which roused the admiration of all. On the night of August 8, 1942, the A.-I.C.C. passed the famous " Quit India " resolution. It called upon the British to withdraw from India forthwith. The next morning I heard the announcement over the radio of the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and members of the Working Committee.

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In Jail Again

On the morning of August 9, Mathura Prasad, my secretary, had gone to the city, and I was lying in bed at Sadaqat Ashram, reading the newspaper reports of the proceedings of the Working Committee, when Archer, District Magistrate, followed by the Civil Surgeon, Major Murdoch, put in his appearance. Archer inquired of my health and programme. I at once understood the object of his visit. When I asked him to what I might attribute the honour of his visit, he told me that, in view of my illness, he had asked the Government for instructions and that the Government had referred the question to the Civil Surgeon who had been asked to report whether in his opinion it was safe to take me to a far-off place. That was why he had brought the Civil Surgeon with him. The Civil Surgeon examined me and decided that I was not fit to undertake a journey. Meanwhile, my wife and sister, who had been informed of the possibility of my arrest, came to see me. At mid-day I was taken to Bankipur Jail.

Mathura Prasad and Chakradhar Saran accompanied me to the jail and made all the necessary arrangements for my comfort and returned. Within a few minutes Phulan Prasad Varma was brought in. Towards nightfall, Mathura Prasad, who had a talk earlier with Archer, also entered jail. The rate of arrival of prisoners increased the next day. On their return from Bombay, Sri Krishna Sinha, Satyanarain Sinha and Mahamaya Prasad were arrested and, along with Anugrah Narain, they were brought to Bankipur Jail. I heard that the courts had been closed and that a huge procession had gone up to the gates of Government House, raising slogans. There was no ban on newspapers in the jail, but they did not tell us much. The only source of news was the newcomers.

The next day a big procession marched to the Secretariat. The police opened fire, nine young men were killed and many wounded. About forty young men, who were arrested for having taken part in the procession, were brought to Bankipur Jail. It was they who told us of the happenings of the day.

The cutting of telephone and telegraph wires had started that day. The telephone system in Patna was paralysed. People kept marching in the streets the whole night and we could hear the din even from inside the jail.

The jail was packed to capacity as, owing to the increase in dacoity and other crimes since the outbreak of the war, there were a great number of criminals in the jail. Many of them were under-trial prisoners. As they faced accommodation shortage with the influx of political prisoners, the authorities decided to keep the upper class prisoners in Bankipur Jail and transfer the others to the Camp Jail. The forty young men who had been arrested that day were to be taken to the Camp Jail the next day. These young men who were lodged in a double-storeyed building were able to carry on a conversation with the crowd waiting outside the jail. The young men told the people of the plan to transfer them to the Camp Jail the next day. The crowd, therefore, waited patiently till 3 the next morning when lorries were brought in for the transfer of the young prisoners. As the first lorry moved out of the premises, the mob stopped the lorry, released the boys and set the lorry on fire. The other lorries, therefore, did not move out. The prisoners were brought back to the barracks. The military came on the scene and cleared the area. The boys were transferred to the Camp Jail thereafter under military escort.

The "A" division prisoners increased every day so that there was no room left for them except in the jail hospital. There was talk of transferring them to Hazaribagh Jail, but by that time railway traffic had been completely dislocated and the trains had stopped running. For about a month the A-division prisoners were kept in the hospital or somewhere else till they could be taken to Hazaribagh. But I remained in Bankipur since I was not in a fit condition to travel and since the climate of Hazaribagh would not suit me.

A few days after my entering jail, it was rumoured that I would be taken to some place outside Bihar, where the other members of the Working Committee were kept. But the only mode of transport would have been the aeroplane and as I was not fit enough to stand an air journey the idea was dropped. After ten months in Bankipur, Major Murdoch, Civil Surgeon,

came to see me. It was summer and my health had improved and I was, therefore, intrigued by the arrival of a doctor to see me. I guessed that there was another move to transfer me elsewhere. When I questioned Major Murdoch, he said he had no official information and even if he had he would not give it out. Nevertheless, he told me confidentially that my conjecture was correct. I learnt further that the proposed transfer was not to Hazaribagh but to some place in the south, near Poona. But nothing came of it. It was after I was released that I learnt that they had intended to take me to Ahmednagar Fort, where the Working Committee members had been kept, and that, in fact, a room had been got ready for my stay there. But why the idea was given up I do not know.

At the time of my arrest, I was under the treatment of Vaidyaraj Braj Bihari Chaube, an ayurvedic physician. I was not sure if the Government would allow me to continue the treatment while in jail, even if I made a request. Besides, I did not like asking for favours. I, therefore, had to switch over to allopathy. My usual physicians were Dr. T. N. Bannerji, Principal of the Patna Medical College, Dr. Raghunath Saran and Dr. Damodar Prasad. The Government permitted me to call Dr. Bannerji, if the Civil Surgeon, who was ex-officio Superintendent of Jail, thought it necessary. Dr. Bannerji made frequent visits. If I happened to be seriously ill, he used to bring Dr. Saran and Dr. Prasad along with him. I was thus able to have in jail the advice of Patna's leading physicians. I have no complaints against the Government regarding the arrangements they made for my treatment and comfort. The authorities permitted, from the very beginning, Mathura Prasad and Chakradhar to stay with me. Later Balmiki was also allowed to join me.

The frequent coming and going of prisoners stopped after some time because prisoners were not brought to Bankipur after arrest but were taken directly to the Camp Jail. The prisoners on the sick list used to provide me with a sort of link with my colleagues in Hazaribagh because sick prisoners from outside were brought to Bankipur Jail before being taken to the Patna General Hospital. But this also stopped soon because the prisoners were sent to the hospital direct. Despite this, news always reached us. It would be interesting for the

readers to know that we in Bankipur Jail had come to know that the members of the Working Committee were in Ahmednagar Fort a few days after our arrest, probably long before even the public outside were aware of it.

Patna newspapers suspended publication a few days after our arrest. The Bihar Government started publishing a daily newspaper called *The Patna News*. We were allowed to read it and one thing we learnt from it was about the imposition of punitive taxes or collective fines in the province and the exact sums levied in each area. We computed that within a few months the amount of the fines rose to nearly Rs. 20 lakhs!

Prison life is bound to be irksome in so far as it deprives one of freedom, but I should say that I did not, after all, have a bad time in Bankipur Jail. I adjusted myself to my surroundings soon and to the routine I had been accustomed to while I was in Hazaribagh Jail years earlier. The arrival of new prisoners was always a cause of excitement since they brought fresh news. Some time later we began getting newspapers but we were not carried away by the reports of what was happening in the country. When the flow of fresh prisoners ceased, I began devoting my time to spinning, reading and writing. My health, of course, was not good, though I was not always confined to bed. Members of my family used to visit me often, almost always accompanied by my grandchildren. They were joyous moments when I used to spend a half-hour playing with the children. Arun, my two-and-a-half-year-old grandson, became so used to the place that as soon as he arrived he would run from the jail gates to the hospital ward where I was kept. I used to give him and my grand-daughters the sweets they usually demanded but he would go away disappointed when I said I could not go back with him as he desired.

I passed an anxious time when we learnt from newspapers that Gandhiji had gone on a fast. I requested the authorities to allow me to arrange with friends outside for my being telegraphically informed of the day-to-day developments, and they agreed. But in each case the telegrams were censored, with the result that there was a 24-hour delay and the telegrams contained not a word more than what the newspapers had already published. I, therefore, discontinued the arrangement. Though I did not hear it, one day Patna was full of

rumours that the Mahatma was no more. The next day the newspapers said that he was improving and had tided over the crisis. Shortly, to our great delight, we heard that he had safely completed the period of his fast.

Meanwhile, reports of the repressive acts committed by the army, the police and the magistrates trickled to us. The new ordinances, veritable instruments of repression, were being pressed into service not only in matters political but also in ordinary cases. Two examples will illustrate this fact. During a fracas in a village in Patna district over some land a few days after our arrest, a man died. The police gave a political colour to the brawl and arrested eight men and alleged that the murdered man was killed by Congressmen because the deceased had joined the army against their wishes. A special judge who tried the accused found that the man had never been in the army, but as the fact of murder could not be disputed, sentenced the eight persons to death. According to the Ordinance under which the accused men were tried, the sentence had to be confirmed by a judge of the High Court. The High Court judge acquitted seven of the accused and confirmed the sentence of death on the eighth. An appeal to the Privy Council was rejected. The jail authorities seemed to show some interest in mercy petitions being sent on behalf of people sentenced to death. I was asked to draft a petition for this man and when it was sent, the Governor accepted it and commuted the sentence. Because the police had classified him as a political prisoner, this man was released along with other political prisoners when the Congress Ministry was formed in 1946. As soon as he was released he came to Sadaqat Ashram to pay me his respects.

The other instance was that of a disabled man charged with dacoity and sentenced under one of the new Ordinances to seven years' jail. It was stated that some dacoits waylaid a bullock cart laden with rice bags on the Ranchi-Patna road. They collected the bags and, carrying them on their backs, tried to run across the fields. The cartman's cries brought passersby to his help. A chase was given to the fleeing dacoits and all of them were caught. But among the apprehended men was also the disabled man. As he was unwell he was admitted to the hospital ward in Bankipur Jail. Aged 60, he

was lame and could walk only with difficulty. Because of some disability he was unable to stretch all the fingers of his hands. How he could have run a mile with a rice bag on his back was beyond my understanding. But the magistrate who came to record his statement in hospital, believing the prosecution story rather than his own eyes, sentenced him to seven years' imprisonment! Then the man one day came to me and, falling at my feet, began to cry. I promised to help him file an appeal. I got a copy of the judgment through the jailor and drafted an appeal. The High Court acquitted the man.

As for the trial of political cases, the less said the better. An amusing case comes to my mind. A part of Patna district is submerged during the rainy season. One can see from the train vast sheets of water on both sides of the railway track. All the villages marooned in the submerged area called *Tal* are cut off from the outside world for a couple of months. Even the postman who visits the villages once a week during the rest of the year never makes his appearance during this time. Some of the people of one such village had a long-standing dispute with a landlord. The landlord's fertile brain used the new Ordinances to his advantage. He made fantastic charges: he was able to convince the police, if they needed any convincing, that the villagers had set up their own Government in obedience to the 8th August resolution of the Congress. They were supposed to have appointed their own raja, ministers and commander-in-chief and imposed heavy taxes on the people. Some of the stiffest sections of the Penal Code were applied to the accused and their property was confiscated. The "Raja", the "Ministers" and the "Commander-in-Chief" were all brought to Bankipur Jail pending trial. The "Commander-in-Chief" was so sick that most of the time of his detention was spent in hospital. When their case came up before the Sessions Court, they submitted that the entire case was the fabrication of the landlord who had caused this case to be started against them out of enmity, that they had nothing to do with the Congress and that they had never heard of the Bombay resolution. The Sessions Judge accepted the defence version and held that the case was groundless because having been cut off from the world during the time of the A.-I.C.C. session and afterwards, the villagers were unlikely

to have heard anything about the Congress resolution. All the accused were acquitted but they had spent two years in the jail and spent a lot of money for their defence!

There is the example of a 20-year-old boy who was, perhaps, involved in some case of burglary and whom the police wanted, for some reason, to put away in prison for a long time. A few days before August 8 he was arrested for travelling by train without a ticket. While in prison, the disturbances started and the police utilised that opportunity to implicate him in cases of burning and looting of police stations and damaging railway tracks and cutting telegraph wires. He was sentenced to a week's imprisonment for travelling without a ticket and let off. But the police detained him along with other political prisoners and launched some case against him. He was acquitted on his plea that on the day he was supposed to have been involved in the case of arson, he was in jail. But the police were not so easily to be baulked of their prey. Another case was started against him. His plea was the same: that on the day he was supposed to have committed some crime against the State he was in Bankipur Jail. This did not help him, however, and the magistrate sentenced him to a few years' imprisonment. His appeal was rejected. The boy prepared another application stating that he was innocent of the charges, that the jail register could be produced to attest the fact of his presence in the jail when the crime in question was committed and that he had been acquitted on the same plea in another case. When the District Magistrate came on a visit of inspection, the boy submitted the application through him. The Magistrate was somewhat surprised but took the application with him. He called for the case records and, convinced of the boy's innocence, caused him to be acquitted.

There is no end to cases like these and there is no knowing how many innocent people, along with political workers, were victimised. Several people were sentenced to 25 years' and 50 years' imprisonment! Life sentences were not uncommon. The number of those sentenced to four or five years were legion. When the Calcutta High Court declared some of the Ordinances under which the cases had been initiated *ultra vires*, the Viceroy had to promulgate a new Ordinance permitting appeals. When the accused exercised their right of appeal,

many were acquitted by the High Court and several had their sentences reduced. Some were acquitted because they had already suffered imprisonment during detention.

During the previous Congress movements political workers never used to offer any defence in court. Excesses were no doubt committed, but there was, however, some regard for law and justice and the sentences were not as immoderate as during the August 1942 disturbances. Sometimes, heavy fines were imposed, but people did not mind them and gladly complied with the Mahatma's instructions not to offer any defence. But now the attitude of the Government seemed to have changed. Heavy sentences, including capital sentences, were the order of the day. The question, therefore, arose whether Congressmen should now offer any defence or submit to such atrocities. I said emphatically that such cases must be defended. Some did not like my views and some were probably ignorant of them. Many, therefore, did not put up any defence and suffered heavy punishments. My friend, Jaglal Choudhury, was one of them and he was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. His crime was that his son had been shot dead and he had gone to the police station to inquire of the whereabouts of his son's body! Instead of getting an answer to his queries he was arrested.

I expressed myself once again in favour of offering defence when the revised Ordinance permitting appeals was promulgated. There were two arguments in favour of this course. First, if we started defending ourselves, it might make the magistrates less unscrupulous. Secondly, I saw that in the agitation were many people who had nothing to do with the Congress and wanted to defend themselves and there were also many Congressmen who wanted to do so. I said if such men were prevented from defending themselves, it might lead to discontent and in some cases defiance of instructions. In the circumstances, the best thing to do was to allow everyone to defend himself. It was my conviction that most of us would be released at the same time, whatever the sentences awarded to us. It would be unthinkable to allow some of our workers to be condemned for long terms and to continue in prison when we ourselves were out.

I was, therefore, gratified that, as soon as he came out of

detention, Gandhiji directed that defence should be offered in all cases. Our worry was about cases of capital sentences, because the others were bound to be released sooner or later. In Patna, quite a number were sentenced to death, but most of them managed to escape the gallows. When Gandhiji was released, he began negotiations with Lord Wavell, the new Viceroy, on the capital sentences and he succeeded in getting all of them commuted. When Congress ministries were formed, all these people were released. Unfortunately, in Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur and Monghyr districts, some people were executed all of a sudden, before Gandhiji could intercede in their behalf.

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The 1942 Disturbances

In October 1943 Chakradhar Saran was transferred to Hazaribagh Jail and in 1944, as a result of the recommendations of an official committee, which, in accordance with the new Ordinance, used to visit the detenus in jail to review their cases, Mathura Prasad was released. Till December of 1944, Balmiki remained with me. When the committee visited Bankipur, its members asked me if I would like to be released. Not unless and until all the others were released, was my firm reply. Then they asked me if my release would come to me as a surprise. Certainly, I said. Someone among the committee asked me how the destructive programme came to be known and acted upon so rapidly all over the country if the Congress had not planned and circulated it in advance. I replied that while on August 9 the newspapers had published the Congress resolution of August 8, the Government had issued a communique seeking to explain the reasons for its arrest of Gandhiji and members of the Congress Working Committee. This communique alleged that destruction of the means of communications like Posts and Telegraphs and the railways formed a part of the Congress programme. On the following day, the Secretary of State for India, Amery, broadcast a speech from London, which was published in newspapers all over the country, repeating the alleged programme of the Congress. I was, therefore, of the view that as the Congress had issued no programme, the people got the impression they did from these reports that an attack on communications must have been included in the Congress programme and started acting on this information thus broadcast by the highest authorities of the British Government itself.

It is my conviction that this was how the people had come to the conclusion that a destructive programme had been adopted by the Congress and began to act upon it spontaneously. Further, this programme seemed to be consistent with the ideas which used to occur to a section of the people even before, as I have said earlier, and so they took the Govern-

ment at its word. I got sufficient proof for my argument even in jail. When Phoolan Prasad was arrested and brought to jail on the evening of the day I was arrested, he told me that, hearing of my arrest, some people had come and asked him what the Congress programme was, thinking that I would have told him. But he replied that he had not met me for long and he knew nothing about it. But the official communique had appeared the same morning and had attracted the people's notice. He referred them to that communique for the Congress programme.

Two days later, when some young men were arrested in the wake of the Secretariat firing incident and were brought to Bankipur Jail, I learnt from them that all of them were convinced that disruption of communications was part of the Congress programme. That evening, when the mobs outside the jail set fire to a lorry and released the young prisoners in it while they were being transferred to the Camp Jail, the young men in the other lorries were brought back to the barracks. I told them that what had happened was not proper. They replied that if disrupting and destroying the means of communications were proper, the burning of a Government lorry could not be improper. They spoke with utmost politeness though they did not like what I had told them. It was absolutely clear that the destructive programme was considered to be the Congress programme by the people at large.

On account of these activities, the train services on the main line between Moghal Sarai and Asansol were suspended for some time. This was followed by a suspension of traffic on the Patna-Gaya line. Only the Grand Chord line escaped damage and the train services on it were unaffected. In the areas north of the Ganga, the O. T. Railway (now North-Eastern Railway) was so badly damaged that the train services remained suspended for several months. That was the reason why the people outside the province thought that the agitation was strongest in the eastern districts of the U.P. and in Bihar. Naturally, this area went through the severest repression. A large number of people were killed in police and military firings. Many houses were burnt and looted, and people had to undergo untold sufferings. The number of people sent to

jail was beyond computation and to accommodate them ordinary convicts had to be let off. Among such releases in Bihar were those of 30 or 40 dacoits who, people thought, had been let loose on the countryside so that the people might get fed up with the Congress. Instead, it would appear, some of these men joined the Congress agitation. One of them was sentenced to death and several others received heavy sentences. When I was released I spoke to the Governor about this. In the course of his investigation it was found that a number of criminals had been intentionally released before time. I also heard that, at the time when the agitation was at its height, no cases of thefts or dacoities occurred in the affected areas.

The agitators raided many post offices and burnt some of them. In the early stages, they did not grab the money for themselves or for financing the agitation. Mostly they burnt the currency notes. But things changed later on. Some people started collecting money in the name of the agitation, so much so that even some dacoities were committed in the name of the agitation. No one knows where that money went and who made use of it.

During the agitation, I should say that it was the Government officials that incited the people to commit excesses. As for post offices, those who manned them welcomed the arson and looting because, irrespective of the fact whether cash was removed or not, they could always say that they had been deprived of it. In the beginning, the police officials made common cause with the public whom they took to police stations, helped them plant national flags on them and then shouted slogans with them. Such officials were naturally treated well by the public. In some cases, I was told, police officials were given hearty send-offs as they left for the district headquarters and, in their absence, the people took possession of the police stations. Wherever, however, a police official was stiff, he was dealt with severely. In a few cases, police officials were killed. Some of the sub-inspectors of police were tyrants. With the arrival of the military, the attitude of the police officials changed. They committed excesses. Generally, it was the officers and not the constables who were responsible for the excesses.

It has to be admitted that the people did considerable damage to railways and posts and telegraphs and also burnt down a number of Government buildings, but considering the tempo and extent of the agitation, it will be recognised that the agitators did not deal with Government officials harshly. Incidents of killing or even beating of officials were very rare. It seems that the general impression was that it was against the principles of non-violence to belabour or kill anyone, but that destroying property was not incompatible with non-violence. Had the people so desired, they could really have killed a large number of officials without any difficulty, but they did not do so. In spite of this, the Government shot many people by way of reprisals. I believe the ratio would work out to be 50 or 60 men killed for every Government employee murdered but, in the absence of accurate figures, it is at best a conjecture. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the agitation was not entirely non-violent and that the people lost restraint.

Actually, the 1942 agitation could retain its tempo only for the first two months or so, after which it slowed down and then the people were mainly on the defensive against the repressive policy of the Government. A section of the people tried to revive the agitation, but without much success. Only sporadic incidents occurred here and there, which had no effect either on the Government or on the public except to provide a handle to the Government to continue its repression. Some people never courted arrest and continued to work from outside and others who were jailed joined them after release. Though it became clear that the revival of the agitation was impossible after the original enthusiasm had waned, those who still worked towards that end continued to remain underground. Quite a number of workers belonged to this category. Soon underground existence seemed to be the safest way to escape the wrath of the authorities, but even then many of these men did not rest but did acts indicative of exemplary courage. At some places, these people created such well-knit organisations that the Government could never break them or succeed in tracing the organisers.

When the Congress ministries were formed in the provinces and all cases against underground workers were withdrawn,

then alone could the whereabouts of these men be revealed. These people certainly deserve the utmost praise for their courage and efficiency. I feel that if these people had not gone underground, many of them might have been hanged or subjected to severe victimisation. But in that case the innocent public would not have suffered as it had to, and the agitation too would have forged ahead and the Government's efforts to suppress it would have failed. Leaders in that case would have been in the public eye and the people would have gladly suffered in complying with their wishes. One of the results of underground work was that the agitation could not have a sufficiently wide basis and the acts of a few persons recoiled on the community in general. I, therefore, feel that if those who destroyed railway tracks and the telecommunications system had done so openly and confessed what they had done, the people would have exhibited much greater courage and would have come forward to follow them. Many innocent men would then have been saved from the uncertainties and hazards of underground existence. However, it is all a matter of faith in non-violence. Those who do not believe in it cannot be bound by it. The people had come forward to the extent that they did because of the policy of open revolt. If they had continued that policy, they would have achieved a great deal.

I was in jail in 1943 when I heard of the terrible Bengal famine. I learnt of the skyrocketing of food grains prices and was pained to learn that the common people were more and more unable to buy the food grains they needed. I was reminded of the famine which I had heard of as a boy while I was studying at Patna and at Chapra. I remember how the Government had undertaken digging of tanks in many places in order to provide work to people and one such tank was dug in a village near ours. Cooked food was distributed at some places. The price of rice of good quality had then soared to 9 seers for a rupee from 15 seers for a rupee which was the ordinary price, and it went even higher when the famine was at its peak.

We read about the deteriorating situation in Bengal in the newspapers. Then came the news of starvation deaths and the piling up of the dead in the Calcutta streets. Photographs

and gruesome details spoke vividly of the horrible situation. I continued reading the papers until one day I could have no more of it and threw aside the paper. I stopped reading the papers for some time; I could not bear the horror dished out from day to day. I was angry because I was helpless. Public organisations had started relief operations and started collecting funds, but here was I rotting in jail. I could do nothing but support an appeal for funds issued by P. R. Das in Patna, suggesting that, as it was the harvesting season in Bihar, it might be possible to collect food grains and send them to Bengal. I learned a few days later that the Government had intercepted that letter to P. R. Das and refused to deliver it!

The famine claimed five million victims, though the Government estimates did not go beyond two million. Whatever the reason, the Government could just do nothing to check the deaths. Khwaja Nazimuddin was the Chief Minister and H. S. Suhrawardy the Food Minister in the Bengal Government. I could not understand how the people in Bengal could take all this quietly. How could the Ministry function as though nothing had happened and how did the legislators allow them to be nonchalant? But one must remember too that those were war days and the country was being governed by Ordinances. The Muslim League was in power. No one could do anything. Lord Linlithgow, who had displayed so much vigour in suppressing the Congress, could do nothing to face the famine which killed a larger number of people than the combined casualties among all the belligerents of World War II. He did not even once care to visit Bengal. His successor, Lord Wavell, visited the stricken province soon after he took over. He called upon the army to render help to the sufferers and sent the Bihar Governor to officiate for the Bengal Governor who was ill. The new Viceroy showed considerable vigour and somehow, after many months, the situation improved and starvation deaths on the roadside ceased.

Rumours were afloat that on this sad occasion many of those who were entrusted with the task of protecting the people from this calamity filled their own coffers and became rich overnight. One might recall my earlier reference to the scorched

earth policy of the Government with the threat of the advance of Japanese forces. The authorities took possession of all stocks of rice and all countrycraft in the coastal areas to prevent their falling into the hands of the invader. It was this policy which was in no small measure responsible for the famine. Lord Wavell was Commander-in-Chief of India when this policy was given effect to and the scorched earth policy was his brain child. Therefore, as soon as he became Viceroy, he tried to repair the damage he had done by deploying armed forces to help the people.

In Bihar also, food prices went up considerably. Rice was sold at one time at Rs. 30 a maund, but the situation never became as bad as in Bengal. There were no starvation deaths. The calamity demonstrated one thing, namely, that the whole country was at the back of Bengal at that critical juncture just as it had helped Bihar during the earthquake disaster. The only difference was that the famine occurred during the war when the people had no surplus resources. Money could not buy foodgrains without the help of the Government and, even if foodgrains were procured, its transport to Bengal could not be arranged without the Government's permission, because all means of transport were controlled. That is why people could not do as much as they desired to. The area affected by the famine was very large and the distress caused by it was of long duration, whereas the Bihar earthquake lasted for just a few minutes. All that we had to do in Bihar was to repair the damage done by the earthquake. Most unfortunate as these natural calamities are, they serve to demonstrate that India is one and the Indian people are one. But did this moral make any impression on those who were bent upon dividing the country?

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I Write in Jail

THIS time I made a successful effort to devote my time to writing in jail, unlike in 1930 when what little I wrote was lost later. I decided to make a thorough study of the demand for the division of India which I had earlier looked into a little and to set down my views on the feasibility or otherwise of the demand. I procured all the books so far published in support of Pakistan and examined the premises on which the demand was built. I probed the reasons for the demand, argued what exactly would constitute Pakistan if the demand were accepted and discussed the viability or otherwise of the new State. I was of the view that Pakistan was not based on correct premises and that it would be impractical. I decided to present the pros and cons before the public, particularly the Muslims, so that others too would see like me that Pakistan was not a practical proposition. I, therefore, wrote at length.

After setting down my opposition to Pakistan, I thought it necessary to present the other side of the picture also, namely, the plea that Hindus and Muslims constitute two different nations and that both should, therefore, have their respective homelands by dividing the country. The manuscript became voluminous. My progress was rather slow because of my ill health. Sometimes for months I could not do anything. Further, there appeared to be no urgency because there was no hope of securing permission for the publication of the work while I was still in jail and the chances of an early release seemed slender. So I went on working at a leisurely pace.

Meanwhile, a friend who had been released passed on the information to a press correspondent and a newspaper published the news that I was engaged in writing a book on Pakistan. Then the Commissioner of Police visited me one day and asked me how far I had progressed in my work. At his request I showed him the whole manuscript. It was not quite easy to read it, as, to save paper, which was not in great supply, I had written in very small letters and on both sides of the leaf. All kinds of amendments and alterations had been made

between paragraphs and on the margin, and different inks had been used. After turning over the pages, he asked me if I desired to publish the manuscript. When I nodded, he said the Government could give permission only after reading it and I would have to submit a typed copy. I replied I could do so if the Government gave me the facility for having it typed.

I then wrote to the Government on the question. I suggested that my assistant, Chakradhar Saran, who was familiar with my handwriting, be permitted to type it in the jail office. He had already been released and the only place where he could type was the jail office. Otherwise the Government should ask anyone else to do the typing at my expense or they could transfer any prisoner knowing typing to Bankipur Jail. I then recollected that Michael John, a Congressman and a labour leader of Jamshedpur, who was in Hazaribagh Jail, knew typing and wrote to the Government that if he could be sent to me it would be the most convenient arrangement as it would avoid the manuscript being seen by an outsider before the Government had approved of it.

The Government acceded to my request and Michael John was brought to Bankipur Jail. He applied himself diligently to the task and finished the typing by June 14, 1945 and on the same evening I was informed that I would be released the next morning. The Superintendent inquired of the Government whether both the handwritten and typed copies of the manuscript should be retained for official approval or handed over to me at the time of my release. Luckily, the Government decided to hand over the whole manuscript to me and, when I came out, I brought it with me.

Meanwhile, I had been without a companion since March 1944 and so, when the visiting committee came to the jail, it was good enough to recommend to the Government that someone should be sent to Bankipur to keep me company. I suggested some names as asked for by the Government and, accordingly, Phoolan Prasad Verma was transferred to Bankipur. But he too was released early in 1945 and his place was taken up by Manindra Kumar Ghosh, who was transferred from Hazaribagh Jail. He was hard-working and intelligent. He compared the typescript of my work with the manuscript

and checked up the figures. He pointed out one shortcoming in the manuscript. He said that I had not indicated how the Hindu-Muslim problem had grown more and more complicated with the result that the Muslim League had only one solution for it now, partition of the country. I took note of Ghosh's suggestion, but I could not write anything new while in jail. I completed the book after my release by adding to it, while in Pilani in August 1945, a detailed history of the Hindu-Muslim problem. With the help of Chakradhar and Mathura Prasad, I revised the manuscript and, when I visited Bombay a few weeks later, handed it over to the publishers. In January 1946, the book came out, under the title *India Divided* and was sold out in a month. The second edition appeared two months later.

I also took to the work of writing my reminiscences in jail. I had started it while I had gone to Sikar, in Rajasthan, in 1940, along with Jamnalal Bajaj for rest during my illness. I had not mentioned it to anyone, not even to Mathura Prasad, my secretary, who always lived with me. As is my wont, while in Sikar, I would get up daily at 4 in the morning and write for two or three hours before the others woke up. I could not, however, write much in Sikar and after leaving the place I never got any time to even think of it. Two years later, when I entered jail, some of my friends who, by now, had come to know of it, insisted that I should complete the work. I hardly knew where I had left off. The manuscript was lying somewhere in my village and I could not think of sending for it lest the C.I.D. should read it. However, trusting to my memory, I picked up where I had left off and began writing further. Gradually, the size of this manuscript also began to swell. I might have finished it while still in jail if *India Divided* had not taken up so much time.

Sometimes I used to wonder if it would be of any use writing my reminiscences or autobiography. Whatever I possess or have achieved is entirely due to the goodness of my brother and Gandhiji. I was not sure if there was anything which others could learn from me or my life's account. I had no doubt dedicated myself to public work, particularly Congress work. Perhaps, my autobiography could be a source of information regarding our political struggle. But, sure enough,

it could not be of any historical value, as I had hardly written during the period any work which would serve as a record and had no copies with me of whatever I did write. Some collect material on current events, but I had not done even this. Some others maintain a diary of daily events, but I was not accustomed to do this either. Thus I had no source of reference with me except my own memory, which, from the point of view of history, could not be an authentic source. These reflections sometimes made me doubt the utility of my effort, which I thought might be looked upon as sheer egoism. Nevertheless, having started it, I thought it best to finish it, without bothering about its publication.

All the reminiscences up to the Ramgarh Congress I was able to write in jail. The rest was finished at Pilani after my release. In a way, these pages are reminiscences in the true sense because only such matters have been put down as I could remember while writing. Maybe, many important events have been left out or in some cases, there are factual aberrations here and there because only matters and events which left an abiding impression on me have been mentioned and others left out. One thing, however, I can say with confidence and that is that nothing has been knowingly misstated or wrongly put. My friends who went through the manuscript insisted that I should have it published. They showed it to others who were considered good judges in this line and they too felt that it should appear in print, particularly because it was in Hindi.

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Passing Away of Some Friends

MALARIA spread in Bihar in epidemic form in 1944 and took a heavy toll. Dr. S. K. Sinha and Anugrah Narain had been released by this time and they took up relief work. They formed a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. T. N. Bannerji with some funds from the balance of the Bihar Earthquake Relief Fund which I released for them. As I have said earlier, a trust had been set up to administer the use of the balance of the Earthquake Relief Fund for relief in Bihar in case of natural calamities. It used to be utilised for relieving distress in recurring floods but the interest accruing from the Fund was enough for this purpose. Later, a major part of the Fund was handed over to the Charkha Sangh which administered it as a separate account. During the 1942 disturbances, the work of the Charkha Sangh had come to a standstill and its funds in the bank were frozen by the Government. I wrote to the Government asking them to release the funds kept apart for relief in case of calamities. When the Government agreed, I operated the account, which was standing in my name, and remitted an amount to the relief committee set up by the doctors. Later, when S. K. Sinha and Anugarh Narain started another committee, I remitted another amount with which, as nucleus, they carried on relief work. Eventually, the Government released the entire amount of the frozen funds for relief work, but only a part was spent and the major portion is still intact. I felt happy that, unlike during the Bengal famine, the Government did not stand in the way of my helping in relief work during the malaria epidemic.

At this time, *The Indian Nation* of Patna began writing editorials demanding my release for organising relief work in a proper manner. From the public too, the demand was raised for my release. When I heard of this, I resented it because I had been arrested for political reasons and I did not want to be released until the issues on which I had been arrested were settled and my companions were also released. Nor did I think that my presence was necessary for relief work which

was being ably handled by S. K. Sinha and Anugrah Narain. I also felt that the Government might misconstrue the agitation and think that the organisation of relief was being used merely as an excuse to get me released and even think that the agitation had my sanction. So I wrote to the Government saying that the agitation was uncalled for and that I did not want to be released. I learnt after my release later that the Governor did think of releasing me but that the Government of India's unwillingness stood in the way. When my letter was received, the Governor told the agitators that the question of my release did not arise as I myself did not want it.

During the period I was in jail, many friends and workers lost their lives. Those who lost their lives as a result of police and military firings were numerous. Very few among such martyrs were personally known to me, because most of them belonged to the rank and file. Further there were many among them who had never been Congressmen before but had joined in the 1942 campaign because they felt that it was Gandhiji's last struggle for freedom. The incidence of death in the jails at this time was somewhat high. In Bihar, we were distressed at the passing away in prison of several people amongst the Tana Bhagats of Ranchi.

Outside my province, some died in jails whose places can never be filled. Foremost among these was Mahadev Desai who died a few days after his arrest. He had been kept in the Aga Khan's Palace in Poona along with Gandhiji when one day he had a heart attack and did not recover. The effect on the Mahatma was very great because Mahadev had been his right hand. Ever since he joined Gandhiji, Mahadev had tried to follow his ideals and principles implicitly and had succeeded to a large extent. He worked so hard that the work of three men could not equal his. The jobs he did were of a varied nature, ranging from cleaning a commode to working as an emissary in most delicate negotiations. He wrote fine articles in a remarkable style which bore a close resemblance to Gandhiji's own. To all these jobs, Mahadev attached equal value and did everything with grace and cheerfulness. He was so simple and good-natured that he was never known to have quarrelled with anyone. He and I met for the first time when Gandhiji brought him and his wife, Durga Ben, to work in the

school opened by him in Champaran. Since then we had been good friends and the news of his death, therefore, came as a great blow to me.

Another death was that of Gandhiji's wife, Kasturba, in 1944, after a protracted illness, also in the Aga Khan's Palace. Gandhiji was by her side when she breathed her last. She was universally known as Ba, meaning mother. We met for the first time when in 1917 she visited Champaran while Gandhiji was there. Fifteen of us were staying in a house and we had engaged a cook to prepare our meals. When she arrived Gandhiji asked us to dispense with the cook. We thought it odd that she should cook for all of us, she looked so weak and frail. Gandhiji would not listen to us and asked us not to bother about her appearance, assuring us that she was used to doing hard work. She took over the work, doing it with facility and treating us with motherly affection. We continued to receive this affection from her ever since, whether we were in Sabarmati Ashram, in Maganwadi, in Sewagram or in a train. She was an ideal Hindu woman, a symbol of Indian culture and the very embodiment of affection. One day Gandhiji told me: "It gives me also pleasure to call her (my wife) Ba!" Since long they had risen above the traditional relationship of husband and wife and Ba had really become Ba for Gandhiji also. The tragic story of her last days can be learnt from Gandhiji's letters to the Government during her illness. Those touching letters have been published by Vanmala Parikh and Dr. Sushila Nayyar in a book entitled *Hamari Ba*.

Maulana Azad's wife also passed away while in jail. It was particularly distressing to learn that during the early stages of her illness the Maulana was not permitted to see her. We had never seen her since she observed *purdah*. R. S. Pandit, whose death occurred during the same period, was very intimately known to me, and the news was a rude shock. The Government followed a strange policy towards the prisoners. They were generally allowed to correspond only with their near relatives. But sometimes I got letters from persons who were not related to me at all while my telegrams of condolence and sympathy to Maulana Azad and Vijayalaxmi Pandit never reached them.

In my own province, a most tragic death for me was that of Ram Dayalu Sinha who had been my companion from our college days. We grew to be good friends later. For years he had been keeping indifferent health, which rendered him unfit for the Congress campaign, and that was why the Government spared him. He died a few months after my release and a connection lasting 35 years was suddenly snapped. He was a great man of Bihar and it is not easy to fill the void left by his death.

There were a few friends outside the Congress whom I never saw after my release. One of them was Vaidyaraj Braj Bihari Chaube, the great ayurvedic physician who attended on me. At the time of my arrest, he hurried to Sadaqat Ashram to see me. He gave me some medicine and was so genuinely concerned that, in his simplicity, he suggested that, if I did not mind, he would talk to the Governor about me. Little did he know that the orders of arrest emanated from quarters which the Governor could not disobey. But I was deeply touched and I cannot easily forget that incident.

Another friend was Ganesh Dutta Singh whom I had come to know when I was a student in Calcutta where he was practising as a lawyer. He had always been good to me, although we had parted company in political matters. For many years he was a Minister in the Bihar Government and his activities came under fire from Congressmen, one of his strong critics being myself. But whether as a Minister or later when he retired, he always showed great concern for the health and welfare of public workers. He did not like the idea of our going to jail for that reason. When he was Minister, he set apart a substantial portion of his salary to form a charitable trust, amounting to several lakhs of rupees, which he donated for public causes. In fact, he presented us with an ideal which was hard to follow. The Congress ministers received only Rs. 500 as salary, which made saving almost impossible, but I know of cases where small amounts were saved and utilised for the public good.

Nirsu Narayan Sinha was another person, the differences with whom on political issues did not cloud our friendship and mutual regard. I also had a bereavement in my own house. My niece died while I was in jail. She was the first

child of my brother and was the first baby that I had fondled in Zeradei. She was very much attached to me. She had come to see me once in Bankipur Jail and I never imagined that it would be our last meeting. She was fortunate at least in this that she had her husband and her children by her side when she died.

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Release

A FEW days before we were released rumours were afloat that members of the Working Committee would be freed soon. Leaders detained in Ahmednagar Fort had been transferred to other places and this seemed to corroborate the rumours. At last, on the evening of June 14, Lord Wavell made an announcement which was broadcast by All India Radio that night, that orders had gone forth for the release of members of the Working Committee the next morning and that he would call a conference of leaders in Simla to discuss his new proposals which he outlined in the broadcast. When people heard this broadcast in Patna, they assembled in great numbers before the jail gates thinking that I would be released the same night. They stayed on for a long time despite the jail authorities telling them that there would be no releases that night. The next morning a large crowd collected before the jail.

As I was about to leave, I paused to look back on the events of the three long years I had spent behind prison bars. It was pleasant to think that we had inspired some sort of affection in the hearts of other prisoners in Bankipur. They had come to have a great regard for us and looked upon us as bigger than jail officers. Whenever any of them was in trouble he would rush to seek our help, despite our telling them that we were as helpless as they. Though we were not expected to meet the other prisoners, the jail authorities were not too rigid in their outlook and a peculiar friendship was the result. I must also state that, as long as we stayed, the treatment of other prisoners by the officers was also good. In fact, many of the hard-bitten jailbirds told us that the attitude of officers had changed. But I must say this for Bankipur jail officers that they were really a good lot. It is difficult to say how those prisoners took the news of our release. Perhaps they thought they too would soon be released. If they did, I should say that the hopes of many of them were belied.

I immediately left for Bombay where a meeting of the Working Committee had been called to consider the Wavell

Plan. In the midst of our discussions Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad, as Congress President, received invitations from Lord Wavell to go immediately to Simla. While they left for Simla, I took a train for Patna. But two days later I received a telegram to hurry to Simla where a meeting of the Congress Working Committee had been convened. I stayed in Simla along with the others for about two weeks. At first Lord Wavell had separate discussions with leaders. The Congress was represented by Gandhiji, Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru. The League was represented by Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and others. Finally, a full-fledged conference was arranged to which, besides the Presidents of the Congress and the Muslim League, Chief Ministers of the provinces and, where ministries had gone out of office, former Chief Ministers were invited to participate.

Lord Wavell's proposals, in a nutshell, were: The Cripps offer still stood and Indians alone would work out the new Constitution of India. As an interim arrangement, acknowledged leaders of Indian political opinion would be invited to constitute the Executive Council, on the basis of parity between Caste Hindus and Muslims. All members of the Council, except the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, would be Indians. The proposals recognised Harijans as a separate entity for purposes of representation in the National Government. The Congress in a way accepted the proposals, so much so that we even proceeded to select our nominees on the Government.

The war was still on, and conditions in the country were not good. We thought that we might be able to improve them by accepting the new proposals. We suggested a Cabinet of 15 ministers besides the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, to be composed of five Caste Hindus, five Muslims and three to represent the Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and other communities. We submitted 15 names, including those of five Muslims, out of whom three were Leaguers, one Congressman and one independent. We left the Muslim League, however, free to suggest any changes in the list of its representatives. But Jinnah put up the claim that only the Muslim League had the right to choose Muslim representatives. Lord Wavell was in a quandary. He did not mind leaving out

a Congress Muslim but he could not exclude Muslims like Khizr Hyat Khan who did not belong either to the League or the Congress. We did not know whose inclusion in the Cabinet Lord Wavell favoured but it would appear that he wanted to take four nominees of the League and one of the Unionist Party of the Punjab. Even this was not acceptable to Jinnah and the conference ended in a failure.

In his statement justifying his reasons for the rejection of the Wavell Plan, Jinnah wanted the Muslim League to be recognised as the sole representative body of Indian Muslims and claimed that the League alone had the right to choose the Muslim representatives. He made a new, and remarkable, point that the Muslims with only five seats in a ministry of 15 would always be pitted against the combined strength of the Caste Hindus and representatives of the other minorities who, he thought, would always side with the Hindus because of the community of ideas between them and the Congress. This would reduce Muslims to a one-third minority, which the League could not accept. I have called this argument remarkable because, so far, Jinnah had been claiming to be the champion of all the minorities and describing the Congress as a party of Caste Hindus only. Such a statement was palpably untenable because the various minorities in their conferences had always opposed the idea of partition of the country and expressed sympathy with the Congress. Very often Jinnah had claimed to be a protector of Harijan rights. Now the cat was out of the bag. In the most unambiguous language, he said that the League could depend only on Muslims and that too only on Muslims nominated by itself, while all the other minorities were at one with the Hindus and the Congress. It was now clear that what Jinnah wanted was not parity between Hindus and Muslims but between Muslims and all the communities put together!

But then what was the picture in the provinces? The Congress ministries having gone out of office, Governor's rule was in force in six out of the eleven provinces. In the two principal Muslim majority provinces, the Punjab and Bengal, the League ministries had fallen. In the Punjab, Khizr Hyat Khan had formed a separate ministry after severing his connection with the League, and Shaukat Hyat Khan, son of the

former Chief Minister, the late Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, had gone over to the League and started a forceful agitation against Khizr Hyat Khan. In Bengal, the League ministry had been defeated. If the opposition had been given a chance to form a ministry, as it ought to have been according to democratic procedure, a non-League ministry would have come into being. But the Governor, in keeping with the general policy of appeasing the Muslim League, ignored the repeated demands of the opposition and assumed all powers under Section 93 of the Constitution. In the North-West Frontier Province, the League had formed a ministry after the resignation of the Congress Government, but it had earned such a bad name that, a few days before our release, it was defeated in the Assembly and a Congress Government had taken its place. Sind was the only province, therefore, where a League Government was in existence at the time of the Simla talks, although there also the Governor had to work actively in the removal of the nationalist leader, Allah Baksh, from office. Later Allah Baksh was murdered. In Assam, which also the League counted as a Muslim-majority province although Muslims formed less than one-third of the population, a Leaguer had formed a ministry after the Congress had quit office and during the Simla talks the unpopular Government was on its last legs.

In these circumstances, it was only a Jinnah who could claim that the Muslim League was the sole representative of Indian Muslims and demand that its representatives alone among Muslims, be included in the Government and given parity with all other communities. Again, it was a British Government alone which could have accepted failure of the conference on account of the demands made by Jinnah. Churchill was still the Prime Minister of Britain and L. S. Amery was still the Secretary of State for India.

There are one or two things here which I would like to mention. Among the names which the Congress had given to Lord Wavell for the formation of the Central Government, Bhulabhai Desai had not been included. He had been Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly before the Congress boycotted it and had earned a great reputation for himself in that capacity. He had been an active Congressman

since the days he joined the party during the Bardoli satyagraha in 1928, even helping the party financially, and had never hesitated to court imprisonment. His ability and sacrifice had been recognised by his appointment to the Working Committee. His exclusion now from the list of Congress nominees hurt him deeply. He was not enamoured of office but he thought he was not considered fit to be included. Although the names of Congress nominees were never published, the fact of his exclusion came to be known and was considered unfortunate; more so by members of the Central Assembly.

It is neither proper nor necessary for me to give the reasons for Bhulabhai's exclusion but, personally speaking, I was not myself satisfied with the list though there seemed to be no other alternative. Bhulabhai was very much attached to me and had great faith in me, about which he often spoke to people. Some time later, when he was seriously ill, I met him in Bombay when he expressed his great disappointment to me. Despite this, when the Government started a treason trial of Major-General Shah Nawaz Khan and his companions of the Indian National Army and we asked Bhulabhai to defend them, he gladly agreed, indifferent as his health was. The trial brought out his extraordinary forensic talents and his defence arguments will always rank with the very best anywhere in the world. In a way, it was this difficult task which ultimately killed him. He fell seriously ill after the completion of the case and never recovered. In him India lost a great man whose place it would not be easy to fill. I cannot but regret that despite his great services to the Congress and the country he should have been excluded from the list of ministers submitted to Lord Wavell.

In the list of nominees, the Working Committee had included my name. I was not willing to accept office, partly because my health did not permit hard work and partly because I felt that I had no previous experience. Further, I had a conscientious objection. I did not think it proper for me to shoulder this burden at such a critical juncture. I further thought that it was more in keeping with my nature to work from outside. I explained my difficulties to Gandhiji, but he advised me to accept the Working Committee's decision,

after which I kept quiet, though I felt uneasy. When ultimately, therefore, the negotiations broke down, although from the national point of view I regretted it, for personal reasons I heaved a sigh of relief.

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Aid to Political Sufferers

My health deteriorated again in Simla and Dr. B. C. Roy advised me to rest in some dry place for some time. I decided to go to Pilani in Rajasthan but on my return to Delhi, my condition grew worse and I could not stir from there for two weeks. When I felt slightly better, accompanied by my wife and sister, I left for Pilani where I stayed for a month. The Birlas made my stay comfortable. Their manager, Harish Chandra, looked after us and I enjoyed the company of the teachers of the Birla College. I completed *India Divided* during my stay. All the reference books I wanted were available in the College library.

The sufferings of our companions in Bihar during the 1942 agitation, particularly those who were under trial or had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, had been causing a lot of worry. Defence of such people meant expense and had been normally arranged by people outside jail. Many Congressmen were released in broken health and it was necessary to arrange for their treatment. In many cases, the only bread-earning members of families were arrested and their people passed through hard days. There were the cases of families whose heads had been executed by the Government. On my release I came to know more about the magnitude of the plight of our comrades, so I decided to collect funds to help them. When I later visited Bombay I mooted the subject to some friends, but the response was not encouraging. The people of Bombay had helped the country considerably with money during the 1942 campaign and so it was not possible now to raise funds for helping what was essentially a provincial cause. I decided then to collect a substantial sum in Bihar itself first and then tackle bigger cities like Bombay and Calcutta.

The collection started unexpectedly one day in Pilani. I casually mentioned the problem to S. D. Pande, Principal of the Birla College, without calling for a collection. One or two days later, on August 9, 1945 to be exact, the Principal

convened a meeting in the College premises and asked me to address it. To my pleasant surprise, the students and staff of the College presented me with a purse of Rs. 1,000. In response to long-standing invitations I visited places like Suryagarh and Fatehgarh in Rajasthan. Everywhere purses were presented to me. I came back to Pilani with Rs. 16,000 in my pocket.

I then proceeded to Bombay where an A.-I.C.C. meeting had been convened. The climate of Bombay did not suit me and I had an attack of asthma. Luckily, the venue was shifted to Poona. There it rained throughout and therefore my recovery was slow. After the session was over I arranged for the publication of *India Divided* in Bombay. Then I returned to Patna where I decided to tour the whole province for collecting funds for political sufferers. In view of the weak state of my health, I planned a ten-day rest in Zeradei before doing so. I advised the district Congress committees of my tour programme and fixed targets for contributions from each district.

I alighted from the steamer at Pahleza Ghat and was walking to the railway station to take a train to Zeradei when I saw a big crowd waiting to see me. Spontaneously I spoke to them of what was uppermost in my mind. Among the crowd were the workers of Pahleza Ghat who had already heard about my plans and had already made their collections and brought their contribution to be presented to me. Immediately after their presentation, the rest of the assembled people made an on-the-spot collection and handed over a considerable sum to me. Encouraged by this enthusiastic response, I appealed to people at every wayside station on my trip to Zeradei and contributions poured in. At Zeradei, the people had arranged a big reception for me on the occasion of my visit after a lapse of four years. At the reception, a purse was presented to me. This put heart into me and made me confident of the success of my mission.

I went to Zeradei for rest but I could not have it. People came in every day and poured out their tales of woe, but they brought in also their contributions to the fund. I visited the people in Zeradei and in the neighbouring villages whose houses had been burnt down by Government officials. I met families whose members had been shot dead in the agitation.

Among them was a family with whom we were intimate which had lost a young man in the Patna Secretariat firing incident. In Zeradei itself, there was police firing, claiming one victim. All this gave me an insight into the atrocities perpetrated by the authorities on the people. Out of the funds I had collected, I gave some help to the families of the distressed.

During my stay, Dwarka Prasad Mishra of Jabalpur visited me in response to an invitation. When he was arrested in 1941 for individual satyagraha he had started writing his book *Krishnayan* which has by now become famous. When I met him after his release in Jabalpur he had recited to me part of the book. Subsequently, when he was sent to prison again in 1942, in his three-year stay he completed his work. Later, he wrote to me saying that he would like to complete the recital of the book and take a foreword from me. He spent some time in Zeradei and I enjoyed the recital immensely. The book narrates the life story of Lord Krishna in the style of Tulsidas's *Ramayan*.

I left Zeradei on a six-week tour of Bihar. The Government's repressive policy had incensed the people and they were, therefore, enthusiastic in their response to the appeal for funds to help the political sufferers. Money poured in and wherever I went I collected large sums. In fact, most of the districts exceeded the quota I had earlier fixed. I had intended to collect three lakhs of rupees in Bihar and two lakhs in commercial centres like Bombay and Calcutta, but Bihar alone contributed the total amount of Rs. 5 lakhs and I dropped the idea of visiting other places.

It was quite a strenuous tour. I had to be constantly on the move, addressing several meetings a day. Though somewhat weak, I was well enough to stand the strain. I could not, however, complete my tour since, towards the end, when two or three districts were still to be visited, I felt tired. Then in Katihar, I developed pneumonia. Dr. Bannerji came from Patna to treat me. After a slight improvement, I was taken to Patna by special train. I had to miss the A.-I.C.C. meeting called in Calcutta. Some time later, when I was well, I toured the areas not visited earlier but I found the enthusiasm had waned.

Now Dr. Jadunath Sarkar and Mathura Prasad desired that the work of publishing some of the volumes of Indian history under the auspices of the Bharatiya Itihas Parishad, which had been held up during the 1942 movement because of the arrest of Jai Chandra Vidyalankar, and to which I have referred earlier, should be taken in hand. Two manuscripts were ready and had only to be printed. They were Volume IV dealing with the age of Vakatakas written by Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar and Dr. Altekar, and Volume V on the Gupta Age written by Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri. The sixth volume was already with the printers. We negotiated with K. M. Munshi for publishing the fourth and fifth volumes by the Vidya Mandir of Bombay, but nothing came of the talks. I then made a flying visit to Calcutta to finalise matters with Dr. Majumdar and Dr. Jadunath Sarkar. The sixth volume was published and the fourth was sent to the press.

When after some time Jai Chandra Vidyalankar was released, I thought that the work would now go on at full speed but something went wrong and Dr. Jadunath Sarkar became indifferent and he resigned from the Parishad. Jai Chandra was not able to proceed with the work and it came to a standstill. I had taken up this work, when my hands were already full, on the insistence of Jai Chandra on account of my regard for the late Dr. Kashi Prasad Jayaswal but things had suddenly got bogged up.

III

Provincial Assembly Elections

In the elections to the Central Assembly in 1945, the Congress annexed an overwhelming majority of the non-Muslim seats, while Muslim seats generally went to the Muslim League. The provincial elections followed, and the pattern was the same. In Bihar, the Congress aligned itself with three Muslim parties — Jamait-ul-Ulema, Jamait-ul-Momin and the Independent Party — to give fight to the Muslim League. The Independent Party did not have much of a following but the Momins had a widespread and well-knit organisation. In the allocation of seats we gave the largest number of seats to the Momins. The Muslim League spent money lavishly during the campaign. The contest was very keen. Out of 40 Muslim seats, 34 were annexed by the League, five by the Momins and only one was filled by a Congress Muslim, Dr. Syed Mahmud. The biggest setback to the Congress was the defeat of Prof. Abdul Bari. No Jamait candidate won and the defeat of the Jamait in a constituency of devout followers of its candidate came as a big surprise to us.

In the non-Muslim constituencies, the Congress did not have to face much opposition, except in Ranchi and Singhbhum districts in Chota Nagpur. Our main opponent in these areas was an organisation called Adivasi Mahasabha, which had been working for some time among the tribal people of Chota Nagpur. Jaipal Singh of Ranchi district was, and is still, the leader. The Mahasabha contested not only the reserved constituencies but also the non-reserved constituencies, as the Adivasis were allowed under the Constitution to do so. The Congress put up candidates in both types of constituencies.

The campaign was not non-violent. Many Congress candidates and their supporters were beaten up. Some of the victims had to remain in hospital for a long time. At one place, five Adivasis were murdered. When I visited Ranchi district I saw proof of the violent methods being used and made a complaint to the Government, giving detailed information on these excesses but it turned a deaf ear. The Adivasi Mahasabha

entered into an alliance with the Muslim League and began to shout pro-Pakistan slogans. The Muslim League, on its part, contributed to the alliance by openly accusing the Congress of murdering Adivasis and went to the extent of alleging that Congressmen had killed more than a hundred Adivasis.

But for all its trouble the Adivasi Mahasabha won only five seats. It won in three non-reserved seats, two from Singhbhum district and one from Ranchi. Out of seven reserved seats, it captured only two. One Adivasi, a Mahasabha sympathiser, was returned from a seat reserved for Christians. All the other seats were bagged by the Congress. To crown it all, Jaipal Singh himself was defeated.

In Monghyr and Shahabad districts and in the labour constituencies, the Radical Democratic Party of M. N. Roy and the Communist Party put up candidates against the Congress. They had not the slightest chance of victory considering their background but they exercised their right to contest. Here too, the campaign was not peaceful. Provoked by the Communist attacks of abuse, someone badly belaboured one of the Communist leaders in one place. I am sorry to say that the elections vitiated the atmosphere to an extent in which our principles received some setback. Both the parties lost everywhere to the Congress, in some cases losing their deposits.

The record of the Radical Democratic Party and the Communists during the years of the war was not a happy one. During the 1942 agitation they denounced the Congress. The maligning campaign was carried on not only in India but in other countries also, particularly in America. These parties called on the Government to crush the Congress, but the Government hardly needed to be told to do so for they were already on the job. Nevertheless, the advice helped it justify its policies and provided food for its propaganda against the Congress. The Government even surreptitiously subsidised the two parties. In reply to a question in the Central Assembly some time later, the Government had to admit that the Radical Democrats were getting a monthly subsidy of Rs. 13,000. This monthly grant became a bone of contention in the party itself. A split manifested itself in the Radical Democratic

Party, one section favouring participation in the Congress agitation and the other, headed by M. N. Roy, opposing it.

The ways of the Communists were no less inscrutable. When before the outbreak of war in Europe the Russo-German Pact was signed, the Communists, who usually looked to Russia for guidance, were vociferous in their support of the pact. When later the Germans invaded Poland and the Russians marched into that country from the east, partitioning Poland according to their pact, the Communists continued to be supporters of the Germans and attacked the British. The Government of India had to declare the party an unlawful organisation and the party went underground. When finally Hitler turned on Russia and Britain and Russia became Allies, the Communists changed their coat again and came out in support of Britain. They called the war a "people's war" and preached that it was everyone's duty to help Britain in her war effort. They, therefore, opposed the Congress agitation along with the Radical Democrats. It was because of this attitude of the Communists and the Radical Democrats that the Congress, and in particular the Congress Socialists, came to have a feeling of extreme dislike for these parties.

The Congress then had to decide whether it should form ministries or not. Now that the war had ended the reason for which the Congress ministries had gone out of office was no longer there. Further, the people were fed up with the existing regimes and expected the Congress to assume power. Most of the Congressmen and even outsiders were in favour of the formation of Congress ministries. The Congress decided to do so.

There was no difficulty in the North-West Frontier Province, the United Provinces (later called Uttar Pradesh), Bihar, the Central Provinces (later called Madhya Pradesh), Assam, Orissa, Madras and Bombay, where the Congress was in a majority. In the Punjab, no single party had a decisive majority but the Muslim League was the largest single group. The Congress, the Sikhs and the Unionist Parties formed a coalition Government. In Sind, the Muslim League was rather evenly balanced with its opponents and, even with the co-operation of three European members, was not in a majority in the Assembly. Still the Governor invited the League Party leader

to form a Government. In Bengal, the European support gave majority strength to the Muslim League and so a League ministry came to power.

In Bihar, the ministry was formed with S. K. Sinha as Chief Minister with his same old team. Jaglal Choudhury, who had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment and was still in jail, was released by the Government and inducted into office. Some time later, the Cabinet was enlarged by the addition of five more ministers.

I would like to say a few words about my interest in the welfare of cattle, particularly the cow. Mahatma Gandhi had pronounced views on the subject. He had goshalas attached to Sabarmati Ashram as well as Sewagram Ashram. There was a long-established goshala near Wardha run by Radhakrishna Bajaj under the supervision of Jamnalal Parnerkar, one of the workers who acquired special experience of cattle breeding on the principles set out by Gandhiji. Before he died, Jamnalal made this goshala into a major institution. I used to visit it as well as the goshala attached to Sewagram Ashram and acquired great interest in the work, although I never made a special study of it. I knew the economics of a goshala and also studied the working of the tannery attached to it. I have written a few articles on the subject. I felt the utility of the tanneries being attached to goshalas and once tried to persuade many goshalas, particularly that of Darbhanga, to adopt that idea. I have, however, never been a member of the Go Seva Sangh.

In 1946, Radhakrishna and Janki Devi Bajaj wrote to me asking me to preside over the Cow Protection Conference in Wardha and saying that it was Gandhiji's wish that I should agree. Accordingly, I went to Wardha. Experts like Sardar Datar Singh, Lala Hardev Sahai and Shri Shahi from Madhya Pradesh attended the conference. I devoted special attention to my address which I delivered at the conference. After seeing the progress in Wardha I decided to convene a similar conference in Patna in consultation with the Darbhanga goshala workers. The idea fructified and representatives of all goshalas in Bihar besides Datar Singh, Hardev Sahai, Syed Rahimtulla Kazi, Nazir Ahmed Sherwani and the Bihar Government's cattle specialists attended the conference. I presided and Seth

Banshidhar Dhandhaniya of Bhagalpur was chairman of the reception committee. Janki Devi Bajaj attended as a distinguished visitor.

My speech at the conference, made after much study, was appreciated by experts. I did not take interest in the subject because of its religious aspect but because the goshala institution was necessary for our peculiar rural economy. If the economic aspect is emphasised we can have the co-operation of everyone, even those who do not look upon the cow with the same feeling of reverence as the Hindus. To inject religion into the question provokes the Muslims and makes Hindus fanatical and the real work suffers. I explained the importance of the cow in the economy of a predominantly agricultural country and showed how, because of our blind faith and ignorance, we were damaging rather than helping the cause of cow uplift and antagonising others instead of enlisting their co-operation.

Let us take an example. On Id day, Muslims sacrifice cows. It leads to friction and sometimes to Hindu-Muslim riots. But did Hindus bother about the thousands of cows being killed in slaughter houses every day, particularly in cantonments? No one knows how many thousand head of cattle were slaughtered for the benefit of foreign armies in India during the war. No one ever thought of making the cow a sound economic proposition so that a Hindu might never feel tempted to sell it to a non-Hindu. The cow-worshipping Hindus sold cows to the slaughter houses when it was more profitable than keeping them. Beef, hide, bones, fat and horns fetch a better price than milk. If cows are kept scientifically, if milk yield is increased, cow dung is made full use of, and, after their death, the hide, bones and horns are properly utilised, keeping cows would be a source of profit instead of loss as it is today.

In countries where bulls are not utilised for any other purpose than for beef and hides, cows are reared only for milk, without attention being given to the calf. But in a country like India, where people do not eat beef and where the bull is put to several essential uses, we require cows that not only give enough milk but also produce sturdy bulls. This can only be achieved by scientific breeding. In days gone

by, our countrymen devoted attention to this aspect. Even today, we can see some bullocks that can carry heavy loads but cannot run fast while some others can run fast but cannot carry heavy loads. Some cows yield a large quantity of milk but their calves are not strong, and the contrary is true in other cases. The Indian peasant cannot keep both types of cows and we must, therefore, encourage breeding with a view to rearing cows which give good milk as well as produce strong bulls. If goshalas are managed properly, cows will become a paying proposition and their slaughter will cease automatically. We shall also be able to look after the old and infirm cows with the help of the margin of profit earned by them earlier in life. If this scientific method is followed, then alone will people, whether they are Hindus or Muslims, begin to consider the rearing of cows as an economic proposition. To realise this idea in practice is to pave the way for true service of the cow. On these principles, in accordance with the decision of the conference, we formed a federation of goshalas with a permanent registered office at Sadaqat Ashram where we started a model goshala.

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Cabinet Mission Plan

THE Labour Party came to power in Britain in July 1945, after the collapse of the Wavell Plan in June. In September 1945, Lord Wavell made a declaration reiterating the intention of His Majesty's Government to convene as soon as possible a Constitution-making body. The new Government announced in March 1946 that Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A. V. Alexander, three Cabinet Ministers, would come to India to hold talks with Indian leaders and the Viceroy to settle the country's problem. Clement Attlee, Prime Minister, gave the assurance that, while every effort would be made to safeguard the interests of the minorities, no minority group would be allowed to stand in the way of India's political progress. Britain was prepared to give freedom to India and would like her to remain within the Commonwealth but on that issue also India would be free to decide. On the surface, the announcement appeared satisfactory to us.

On March 23, 1946, the three Ministers arrived in India and after preliminary discussions with the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, and his Executive Council, they began a series of talks with the various Indian political parties. They met Maulana Azad, the Congress President, and Mahatma Gandhi. After protracted talks which seemed to take us nowhere, the British Ministers wrote to the Congress and the Muslim League to nominate four representatives each to carry on talks in Simla. The eight leaders and the Viceroy conferred with the Ministers, but their talks failed. Announcing the breaking-up of the conference, the Cabinet Mission said that they would put their plan before India in Delhi. On May 16 the plan was released to the press.

The Plan was divided into three parts. In the first part, they gave cogent reasons for declaring the Muslim League demand for Pakistan as impracticable and said that it could not be conceded. They proposed instead a Federal Constitution for India which the Princely States could also join. The Central Government would have three subjects under

its jurisdiction, namely, Defence, External Affairs and Communications, with power to raise revenue to meet the expenses incurred under these heads. All other subjects would vest in the provincial Governments, as also all residuary powers not specifically mentioned. In the second part, the details of the Constituent Assembly which would frame the Constitution for the country were given. The third part related to the immediate reconstitution of the Government of India. It also stated that India would be free to remain within the British Commonwealth or secede from it.

The Constituent Assembly was to be formed in this manner: All provincial assemblies would return one member for every one million of its population, Muslims and Sikhs would elect their nominees on the basis of separate electorates. While Coorg and Baluchistan representatives would be elected afresh, those who had been elected to the Central Assembly from Delhi and Ajmer-Merwara would be looked upon as representatives of these areas in the Constituent Assembly. All these people would discuss with representatives of the Indian Princes on States' representation in the Assembly, and, in the case of States also, the basis of one member for every one million people would be maintained. British India would thus have in all 292 members, of whom 210 would be non-Muslims, 78 Muslims and four Sikhs.

The provinces would be divided into three groups. In group one would be Madras, Bombay, the U.P., Bihar, the C.P., and Orissa. In group two would be the Punjab, the N.-W.F.P., Sind and Baluchistan while Bengal and Assam would be in group three. In the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly, office-bearers would be elected and procedure determined. After that, members of all the three groups would sit separately and frame Constitutions for their respective groups. Each group would decide whether it wanted to have a common Constitution for the country and, if so, what would be its form and what would be the subjects under its control. Finally, the Constituent Assembly would meet again jointly, with representatives of the Princely States also participating, and would frame the Constitution for India. A separate committee would be constituted to consider ways and means to safeguard the rights of the minorities and its recommendations

would be incorporated in the Constitution. Then, in accordance with the new Constitution, elections to the provincial assemblies would be held, each province having the right to remain in the group in which it had been placed or to break away from it.

For the time being, the Viceroy would reconstitute his Executive Council on which, as far as possible, representatives of all Indian parties would be appointed. Although the Government of India Act, 1935 would continue to be in force and though, according to that Act, all powers would vest in the Viceroy, every possible effort would be made to carry on the work in consultation with, and according to the wishes of, the Executive Council.

The Plan, while not accepting the demands of any political party fully, made an attempt to please all the parties by conceding something to each. Although the Muslim League demand for Pakistan had been rejected as such, the authors of the Plan hoped that the three-tier Constitution, consisting of a Union Centre, an intermediate authority representative of groups of contiguous provinces and finally, the provinces themselves, which permitted grouping of provinces and reduced the number of subjects with the Union to the barest minimum, would largely satisfy the Muslim demand of Pakistan. The opposition by other parties became all the more intense because the whole of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam had been placed in two groups likely to secede from the Centre, though parts of the Punjab and Bengal were Hindu majority areas and, in Assam, Muslims formed no more than one-third of the population.

The Working Committee considered these proposals for several days. During these meetings, the Congress President and other members of the Working Committee met the Viceroy several times to seek clarification of certain points of the Plan and to draw his attention to certain defects. The Committee felt that the provinces should not be compelled to join the groups in which they had been placed. Although the Plan permitted any province to break away from its group after the Constitution had been framed, the Working Committee insisted that the provinces should have the freedom of secession even while the Constitution was being framed. The North-

West Frontier Province and Assam were opposed to joining the groups in which they had been placed and, on their behalf, the Working Committee claimed freedom to keep out of their groups from the very start. It thought that this was, after all, in consonance with the purpose of the Plan as a whole.

The Cabinet Mission replied that it was not their intention to allow the provinces to keep out of their respective groups from the very beginning. But the Working Committee stuck to its view and decided that it would implement the proposals only according to its own views. The Muslim League, on the other hand, criticised the proposals because the demand for Pakistan had not been accepted unequivocally, but it saw in the Plan the seeds of Pakistan in the grouping of provinces, and so, as a step towards its final objectives, accepted the proposals.

Discussions for the formation of an Interim Government were carried on for several days. The Viceroy proposed a Cabinet of 12 members composed of five Hindus, five Muslims and two representatives of minorities. The Congress opposed it, first, because it meant parity between Hindus and Muslims although Hindus were three times more numerous than Muslims. Secondly, the representation for the minorities had been reduced from the quota he had conceded during the Simla talks when a Cabinet of 15 had been proposed with five Hindus, five Muslims and five minority representatives, including two Harijans. It was, therefore, not merely a question of Hindu-Muslim parity. The Congress had accepted the earlier proposals of Lord Wavell in view of the war situation, but now the situation had changed and it could not accept the new proposals which were worse than the earlier ones. The Congress thought that representatives of the minorities could be accommodated to their satisfaction only if the Cabinet consisted of 15 members.

The Viceroy then increased the strength of the proposed Council to 13, with five Hindus, five Muslims, one Harijan and two other minority representatives. When this also was rejected by the Congress, the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy announced the failure of their efforts to form a Government acceptable to both the majority communities and, on June 16, 1946, they announced a list of 14 persons who had been

invited by the Viceroy to form his new Cabinet. The list included five Muslim Leaguers, five Congress Caste Hindus, one Congress Harijan, one Sikh, one Christian and one Parsi, which conformed generally to the list of 13 names given casually by Jawaharlal during discussions with the Viceroy except for the substitution of a non-League Muslim by a Leaguer, and a Congress Hindu by another. The name of a Parsi was added by the Viceroy.

While we were considering the latest proposals, the Viceroy started consultations with Jinnah, some of whose suggestions were accepted by him. The newspapers somehow got wind of the story and when we read it we were startled by this development. When we referred the matter to the Viceroy, he sent us the portion of his letter sent to Jinnah accepting his suggestions. There, the Viceroy agreed not to increase the strength of the Cabinet of 14, to fill the seats of the minorities only in consultation with the Muslim League and to see that the new Government would not do anything to alienate the majority opinion in the League. It was thus clear that the Muslim League consent was to be sought not only in the formation of the Government but also in its day-to-day working. As the Viceroy had scored out the name of the non-League Muslim and replaced it by a Muslim Leaguer, saying that the Leaguers could not be less than five, the Congress began thinking of suggesting the name of a nationalist Muslim to be included in the quota of Hindus. But the Viceroy forestalled us by sending us a letter asking us not to suggest any Muslim names as that would not be acceptable. The Working Committee could never accept such a position as it would amount to an admission that the Congress was a Hindu organisation and that the League was the sole representative of the entire Muslim community. The Congress, therefore, decided to reject these proposals.

Meanwhile, the Working Committee met in Delhi and continued discussion of the Constituent Assembly proposals. With the exception of two or three members, the Committee was in favour of acceptance, although with some conditions. Mahatma Gandhi vigorously advocated acceptance of the May 16 proposals. Just at that time we received a telegram from a Congressman in Assam drawing our attention to one

of the rules framed for the election of the Constituent Assembly of the eastern group according to which every candidate would have to sign a declaration agreeing to accept the grouping plan along with the other parts of the proposals. The Assam Congressman interpreted the rule to mean that it demanded a commitment in advance on the grouping proposal. So misgivings arose and it was decided to study the rules governing the working of Constitution-making bodies more thoroughly. The discussions were postponed to the next day while the study was in progress. Meanwhile, at his prayer-meeting that evening, Gandhiji said that the Assam telegram had caused him concern.

The next day when we met we thought that the rule in question did not lend itself to the interpretation made by the Assam Congressman. Gandhiji then had a meeting with the Cabinet Mission which also confirmed our view and offered to alter the wording of the rule in case Gandhiji objected to it as it was. Eventually, the rule was modified and we decided to accept the May 16 proposals with reservations, while rejecting the June 16 plan for an Interim Government. This decision, with a copy of the original resolution passed by us, was sent to the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission.

The Muslim League, on the other hand, had already accepted the long-term plan and was awaiting the Congress decision on the Interim Government plan before it could announce its own. The Viceroy met Jinnah the day he received the decision of the Congress and showed him the Working Committee's letter. In para. 8 of the June 16 plan it had been stipulated that even if a party rejected that plan, the Viceroy would continue his efforts to form an Interim Government with the help of the representatives of such parties as had accepted the May 16 plan. That was what he proposed to do since both the Congress and the League had accepted the May 16 plan. The Muslim League had been happy in the belief that if the Congress were to reject the June 16 plan it (League) would get all power in its hands and dominate the Interim Government. The Viceroy's intention to continue his efforts to form an Interim Government scared Jinnah somewhat and the same night the League decided to accept the June 16 plan.

On the following day, the Viceroy announced that the

Congress had rejected the June 16 plan but that, in accordance with para. 8 of that plan, he would endeavour to form an Interim Government with Congress and Muslim League representatives. Since, however, the Cabinet Mission was leaving immediately for England, it would take some time for the Viceroy to form the Interim Government, the work for the duration being carried on with the help of the services. The Cabinet Mission left India on June 30 and a caretaker Government was formed.

Jinnah felt cheated and he resented the decision of the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission. The League leaders issued long statements. A meeting of the League Council was called and there it was alleged that the Congress had not accepted the May 16 plan but had mutilated and criticised it so much that it amounted to a rejection. The Leaguers said that the Congress had made no secret of its intentions not to accept the grouping of provinces which was an integral part of the Plan and that the Congress wanted to go into the Constituent Assembly only to wreck it.

In the meantime, an A.-I.C.C. session was convened in Bombay under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru who had been re-elected Congress President. The meeting ratified the Working Committee decision on the Cabinet Mission proposals despite the opposition of the Socialists. Then followed the elections to the Constituent Assembly. The Congress followed the policy of getting even non-party persons elected whereas the Muslim League put up only League nominees. Jinnah himself was elected from the Punjab. The N.-W.F.P. returned three Muslims, including Maulana Azad and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. The only non-League Muslims to be elected were Rafi Ahmed Kidwai from the U.P., Asaf Ali from Delhi and Fazlul Huq from Bengal. Most of the Congress leaders, prominent constitutional experts and patriots were successful. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was returned from Bengal.

After the conclusion of the elections, the Muslim League Council met and decided to reverse its earlier stand and reject both the May 16 and June 16 proposals. It also decided in favour of direct action for the attainment of Pakistan. As a protest against the British attitude, it enjoined on its members to surrender all titles awarded by the British Government.

Speeches in the Council were so intemperate, so full of fulmination against both the Congress and the Government that we thought the League Council was preparing to fight both.

Meanwhile, the Congress Working Committee met in Wardha and adopted a resolution accepting the June 16 proposals for an Interim Government. In terms of para. 8 of the June 16 plan, the Viceroy decided to form an Interim Government leaving out the Muslim League. He invited Jawaharlal Nehru and entrusted him with the task of forming a government. Nehru sent an invitation to Jinnah to join the Government, but he declined. Nehru, therefore, had no alternative but to form a Cabinet leaving out the Muslim League. After an interview with the Viceroy, he called a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee in Delhi to help him in the composition of his Cabinet. Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad and I were members of this committee.

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The Calcutta Massacre

While we were busy with the formation of the Interim Government, Calcutta was rocked by riots of a most unprecedented kind on August 16. That day had been fixed by the League as Pakistan Day. Muslims all over the country had been asked to observe a hartal in pursuance of that decision. In Bengal and Sind, the day was declared a public holiday by the Muslim League Governments. All offices and banks were forced to close down. This was an abuse of power by the Muslim League. The Congress had organised successful hartals for 27 or 28 years in its struggles against the British Government but had never organised a hartal against the British since it assumed the reins of office in the provinces. But the League ignored protests and criticisms. In the Bengal Assembly, before the day of the hartal, opposition members vehemently protested against the declaration of a Government holiday on that day, saying that the hartal would render innumerable people idle and that processions and public meetings portended trouble. But Suhrawardy, Chief Minister, paid no heed to the protests and asserted that the holiday was in the interest of peace.

On the morning of August 16, League volunteers started forcing people to close their shops. This naturally led to riots. Looting and arson became the order of the day. The Government did nothing to intervene till midday on August 17. But by then thousands of people had been murdered and thousands of houses looted and burnt down. Efforts to control the riots did not succeed till the city had passed through a four-day regime of terror. It is said that the conflagration claimed a toll of over 6,000. For days, dead bodies littered the streets. More than 3,000 bodies were collected. Many bodies, it would appear, were thrown into underground sewers and the streets were said to be impassable because of the stench they emitted. The number of people charred to death in burning houses and those thrown into the Hooghly could not be counted. The aged, women, or children; none was spared.

This was perhaps the bloodiest carnage witnessed in India since the sacking of Delhi by Nadir Shah, although I am not sure that his armies could really have massacred so many people. A Muslim League leader, Feroze Khan Noon, had boasted a few days earlier that the League would create a situation which would make people forget the deeds of Chengez Khan and Halaku Khan. This was a sample then of the League's direct action presented to the country. Fracases did occur in some other places like Dacca, Banaras, Allahabad, Raniganj and Delhi on the protest day but they were completely eclipsed by the Calcutta massacre, and the situation in those places was quickly controlled.

In Calcutta also, Suhrawardy took up the work of pacification after a few days and appealed to all to observe peace, which reminds me of the Hindu proverb, " The cat started on a pilgrimage after eating up seventy rats." Even the *Statesman* of Calcutta, always a supporter of the Muslim League Government, was provoked to declare the League Ministry unfit to rule and called for its removal from the seat of power. London papers, including *The Times*, followed in the same strain. But this chorus of protest and all-round condemnation left the League and its leaders unmoved. The very persons who had raised such a hue and cry against the Congress ministries in 1937–39 without any reason, accusing them of excesses, were now silent after such serious rioting, incendiarism and murder, which, if not organised by them were at least connived at by them. All that Jinnah had to say was that whoever was responsible for the riots should be punished but as he had not received the full reports, he was unable to say who was to blame. He was confident nevertheless that League members could not have gone against League instructions but if any had contravened them disciplinary action would be taken against them. The official organ of the League, *Dawn*, suppressed the news of the riots for some time but afterwards, when it did publish the news in brief, it did not comment on it.

It was reported that, in the beginning, most of the victims in Calcutta were from among the Hindus but, as the rioting went on unchecked and as the Hindus received no protection from the authorities, they had perforce to take measures to defend themselves. The situation recoiled on the rioters and a

large number of Muslims were killed. But it is immaterial whether more Hindus or Muslims were killed; the point is that most of those who lost their lives were innocent people who never joined the riots. Property valued at crores of rupees, most of it belonging to the Hindus, was destroyed in the four days.

During this time, negotiations were going on for the formation of an Interim Government and the Viceroy and Jawaharlal made up their minds that the Calcutta happenings should not come in the way of their efforts to set up a Government at an early date. In consultation with us, Nehru finalised a list of names to be included in his Cabinet. I had been in Jaipur taking rest when I had received a telegram from Delhi to finalise the list. After the work was over I left for Pilani where I wanted to stay till the end of August, when the Interim Government was expected to be sworn in. The Working Committee met in Delhi on August 27 and Gandhiji attended it. I returned from Pilani to participate in the deliberations.

In the list of ministers, my name was also included. When during the Simla talks my name had been included in the Congress list, I was reluctant to agree since I was a conscientious objector. But now that the war had ended, that objection no longer held. At first, there were proposals that I should be nominated for presidentship of the Meerut Congress since Jawaharlal would be joining the Interim Government and he would have to vacate the office of President. There were also suggestions that I should be elected Chairman of the Constituent Assembly and not included in the Interim Government. Personally, I had nothing to say in the matter and whatever decision was taken would have been acceptable to me. But if I may state my preference, either of the alternatives of Congress presidentship and chairmanship of the Constituent Assembly would have been more to my liking than a ministership. However, it did not depend on my likes or dislikes and the Working Committee decided that I should be in the Interim Government and I bowed to the decision.

I had been busy for 26 years with Congress work. Never did I attend to my domestic affairs except for a short time after my brother's death. I visited my village only during times of illness. Only Sadaqat Ashram in Patna had been

my home. Now I was to enter upon a different kind of life. I would have to set up a house for myself in Delhi and make my own arrangements to run it. A monthly salary too awaited me and I did not know what instructions the Congress would give about how much we were to draw and how much we should spend. Further I had no administrative experience. For some time I had been Chairman of the Municipality in Patna but this spell in office was brief. I could not take into consideration the work I had done in the Congress because that was more in the nature of public relations than office work. These were the problems that stared me in the face and I pondered over how I should tackle them. What portfolio would be allotted to me I did not know, though there was talk that the Food and Agriculture Department would be assigned to me — if this happened I would be getting a job after my own heart, though there was an acute shortage of food and I knew it was not easy to solve that problem.

I thought we would now be working with a set of officers, many of whom would be those who sent us to prison and made our people suffer many hardships. But I had no prejudice against anyone and felt confident of enlisting everyone's co-operation. There were lots of difficulties before us. Who could say what the League intended to do and how the people would react to the League attitude? I was sure all would be well if we served the people sincerely and impartially. These were the thoughts uppermost in my mind.

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Postscript

In Chapter 107 I have written of how and when I started writing these reminiscences and how they were completed. They covered the events in my life up to the formation of the Interim Government. For four months after its completion the manuscript was still lying with me and during that time much that was important had happened and I thought it would be better to give an account of those events in the form of a postscript.

The Interim Government was formed on September 2, 1946. It consisted of twelve Ministers, namely, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarat Chandra Bose, C. Rajagopalachari, Asaf Ali, Dr. John Matthai, Jagjivan Ram, Shafat Ahmed Khan, Baldev Singh, C. H. Bhabha, Ali Zaheer and me. The inmates of Birla House, where Sardar Patel, Jagjivan Ram and I were staying, gave us a ceremonial send-off that morning. We went to Gandhiji and took his blessings along with other colleagues and then proceeded to Viceroy's House to be sworn in.

All our lives we had been busy struggling against British imperialism. How far then was it right for us to swear loyalty to the British King? This question arose in the minds of many some time before our taking the oath of office. The fact is that taking an oath of this nature is an essential part of the British Constitution, just like carrying on the administration in a democratic manner according to the wishes of the people. The King cannot do anything without the mandate of the people and the people's views are known through Parliament. The Premier is guided by those views. The King does not interfere in the working of the Government and carries out the wishes of the Cabinet and reads out speeches prepared by it. A constitutional expert has said that the British King has to sign whatever paper is put up before him by the Premier, so much so that he cannot refuse to sign even his own death warrant. The instance of Edward VIII having to abdicate in accordance with the advice tendered by his Prime Minister, Stanley

Baldwin, was still recent. We, therefore, argued that working for the independence of India could not be considered incompatible with such an oath. If Baldwin could advise the King to abdicate, Jawaharlal Nehru could advise him to transfer power into Indian hands despite his oath of loyalty. We saw, therefore, no contradiction between these two and all of us took the oath.

I was assigned the portfolio of Food and Agriculture. There was an acute shortage of food in the country, particularly in the rice-growing south. In 1945, rains were poor and the rice crop suffered heavy damage throughout India, particularly in the south. This had an adverse effect on the rabi crop. Certain parts of India had always been deficit areas and to make up for the shortage the Government used to import rice from Burma, but that had been stopped during the war years. In fact, that was one of the reasons for the Bengal famine. Early in 1946, a year of acute shortage seemed to be in prospect and the Government of India arranged for the import of food grains from overseas. But there was food shortage all over the world and so an international organisation was set up to collect surplus food grains wherever they could be had and supply them to the deficit countries. India became a member of that organisation.

News about India's grave food situation reached the United States. Herbert Hoover Sr., former President of the United States, who was in charge of UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency), came to India in the course of his survey tour of deficit areas. He was very much moved at India's plight and recommended a grant of help to her. Then followed the visit of an American non-official delegation, headed by Shultz, a food and agriculture specialist, and they too were concerned at our precarious situation. Consequently, the international organisation allocated food grains to India but could not quite meet our needs as it had to help other deficit areas in the world also.

The situation, therefore, when I took over as Minister was not happy. Starvation had to be avoided. Whatever was available from overseas was being imported and distributed to deficit areas in the country but I realised the truth of what Gandhiji had been saying, *viz.*, that it was folly to depend on

foreign help since there would be a hundred obstacles in the way of imports. I, therefore, decided that we should help ourselves. I at once issued an appeal that everyone should do whatever one could to grow more food, that food should not be wasted and that people should spare as much as possible for others. We continued to import from overseas whatever we could get and the imported food and the stocks procured from surplus areas in the country were despatched to scarcity areas. The utmost economy was effected.

We considered four months, September to December, to be the most critical period. Rationing was already in force and we reduced the quantum of rations. We sent wheat and maize to areas where people had never previously eaten them and did not even know how to cook them. Despite these hardships, people passed through the crisis with fortitude and courage. Rains during the latter part of 1946 were good and the rice crop was average. When our anxiety for the rice-eating areas thus eased somewhat, the situation in the wheat-growing areas began to cause us worry. The wheat crop was still to be harvested and any natural calamity could blast the prospects of a good yield. We, therefore, had to get back the wheat stocks despatched to the rice-eating areas and redistribute them to the wheat-eating areas. Wheat imports from the United States were suddenly delayed because of a dock and coal-miners' strike there. The situation was grave but I was, however, confident of tiding over this crisis as we had tided over the rice shortage.

The food situation was not only my constant worry but also that of all the workers of my departments. The responsibility to save the country from famine rested mainly on them. I was a newcomer but I am gratified to say that there never arose any difference of opinion between me and the officers of my departments and that we all strove as a team to keep the country out of danger. And we passed the crisis. We thanked God that at the end of December, the last month of the crisis period, not a single person had died of starvation.

My conviction that an agricultural country like India should be self-sufficient in respect of food was further strengthened by my brief experience. The problem, I felt, was not easy. Our population is ever increasing and arable land is limited.

Even before the war we used to import 50 to 60 million maunds of rice every year. Now, with increased population, our requirements had increased and would go on increasing. It was well known that the food available to people was not sufficient or balanced. I, therefore, suggested that the production of milk, fish, meat, fats, oils, fruits and vegetables should be increased.

I was interested in the problem of how best to achieve self-sufficiency. The Government could only advise. It would be for the people, who are predominantly agriculturists, to undertake the work. The public had fully co-operated in the relief of the distressed. Many responded to my appeal to consume less cereals and to save food grains by missing one meal a day. I hoped that the people would, in the same way, co-operate with me in the matter of increasing the production of food grains and reaching the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency.

Lord Wavell, in the meantime, was trying to persuade the Muslim League to join the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly. Shortly after our appointment, he began exchanging letters with Jinnah and a time came when Nehru also had to join in the negotiations. The Nawab of Bhopal also joined the talks and efforts were made for a Congress-League compromise. But all these proved futile. Eventually, Jinnah decided to join the Interim Government with no agreement with the Congress but after an understanding with the Viceroy. The Viceroy and we felt that in the course of our working the Congress and League would somehow come together and that it might lead to a final understanding. But the Viceroy, however, asked of Jinnah the fulfilment of para 8 of the June 16 plan which demanded the acceptance of the May 16 proposals before joining in an Interim Government and assured us that the League had been told its coming in now meant its acceptance of the May 16 plan.

When we joined the Interim Government we had decided that we would function as a Cabinet with joint responsibility, which meant that the whole Cabinet would be responsible for the doings of every minister and that if even one of the ministers had to leave, the whole Cabinet would resign. Ministers would not act independently but jointly. We began to work on these lines. We thought that it would be a major departure from the old policy, because the Viceroy would

hardly have any occasion to interfere in our work. If he interfered with one, it meant interference with all and the entire Cabinet would stay or leave as a team. The former members of the Viceroy's Executive Council were appointed separately and they dealt with one another only through the Viceroy and so the removal of one had no effect on the others. When we came in we constituted a Cabinet and we were called Cabinet Members instead of Executive Councillors. We used to meet every evening at 5 and discuss all important problems and take decisions on them jointly. When the Leaguers joined the Government, we hoped that they would fall in line with us in maintaining this convention, but our hopes were belied.

The League joined the Interim Government on October 15, 1946. Its representatives were Liaquat Ali Khan, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, I. I. Chundrigar and Jogendra Nath Mandal. The last-named was a Harijan and the choice was made by Jinnah to show that the League was the repository of minority interests.

Immediately on joining the Cabinet, the Leaguers said that they had not made any commitment to withdraw their rejection of the May 16 plan and that they did not subscribe to the principle of joint responsibility. They turned down Jawaharlal Nehru's invitation to join us in our daily meetings. They joined us only when the Viceroy called a meeting of the Cabinet.

Meanwhile, the situation in the country had deteriorated. The terrible riots in Calcutta had their repercussions elsewhere in the country. Cases of stabbing among Hindus and Muslims became frequent in Bombay, Allahabad, Dacca and other places, many innocent people losing their lives. During the Calcutta riots, the life of the Bihari population was disrupted, many of them were killed and some returned to Bihar. These people narrated tales of horror which made a deep impression on the people. At this time a report came from Benibad, in Muzaffarpur district, that a Muslim had abducted a Hindu woman from Calcutta and was keeping her in the village. Now the pent-up volcano erupted. A large crowd of Hindus marched on that village, attacked the houses of the Muslims, burnt them and took many lives. The Government dealt

with the Hindus sternly, arrested many of them and imposed collective fines.

As news of the incident spread outside the province, it was the turn of Muslims to get excited. Trouble broke out in the Muslim-majority districts of Noakhali and Tripura in Bengal. Hindu homes were attacked, many were killed and several villages were burnt down. Thousands of Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam and many Hindu women were abducted and forced to marry Muslims. As most of the Hindus fled from the affected areas, it became impossible to confirm the reports. Hindus could not go there because the areas were in a state of siege. Charges were made against the Government that it made no attempt to stay the hands of the rioters and, in fact, gave them a free hand as was done in Calcutta. It took some time for the trouble to subside. The difference between the happenings in Calcutta on the one hand and Noakhali and Tripura on the other was that while Calcutta was a Hindu-majority area and the Hindus, after initial reverses, rallied and courageously defended themselves, the Hindus of Noakhali and Tripura were in a minority and could not retaliate against the Muslims.

Now the carnage of their brethren roused the Hindus throughout the country and filled them with a spirit of revenge. Muslim League leaders and Muslim newspapers spouted poison and threw challenges at the Hindus. The Frontier Province was in a state of tension. Jawaharlal Nehru visited the province on an official tour. It was stated that the officers of the Political Department there, who were directly under the Viceroy, incited the people to insult and demonstrate against Nehru. At one place Badshah Khan (Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan) and Nehru were set upon by a violent mob and saved themselves with difficulty. Badshah Khan received injuries on his hand and had to keep it in splints for months. Despite these incidents, however, Nehru's tour was a great success and the people generally extended him a warm welcome. But Hindus in other parts of the country interpreted the Frontier incidents as evidence of the collusion of the British authorities with the Muslim League to suppress the Hindus.

Riots broke out in Bihar. Hindus began attacking Muslim villages in force. In several police station areas of Patna

district, many Muslims were killed, many were tortured and a large number of houses were burnt down. Monghyr, Gaya and Chapra districts were affected. Nehru and Sardar Patel, accompanied by Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, went to Bihar to survey the situation. After a tour of the affected areas and a visit to Patna, Sardar Patel and Nishtar returned to Delhi, Nehru and Liaquat Ali stayed on in Bihar for some more time. I also arrived by plane in Patna and conferred with them on how best to restore the situation to normal. The Bihar Government took effective measures to quell the riots and requisitioned the help of the army also. Gandhiji, who was at that time in Noakhali, spreading his message of Hindu-Muslim goodwill there, threatened to undertake a fast unto death if the Bihar riots did not die down quickly. This had the desired effect and the situation more or less returned to normal.

But what had happened was terrible enough. The number of people killed ran into thousands although Jinnah's estimate of 30,000 was too exaggerated and, in my computation, not more than 3,000 must have been killed. But whatever the number of casualties, it could not be denied that the whole thing was too tragic for words, something we should be ashamed of. The result of the riots was a great setback to Hindu-Muslim unity. There was a feeling of fear and apprehension in Muslim minority areas and many Muslims left their homes and migrated to cities. The Government tried its best to rehabilitate them. Though the riots lasted only a few days, the misery it left behind was very great and the problems of the administration increased.

The Congress session that year was to be held in Meerut. Some time before the session, during the Garhmukteshwar Fair in Meerut district, riots occurred and many Muslims were killed. The Muslims avenged themselves later. This was followed by widespread disturbances in the Frontier Province, where stabbing became frequent in many towns, causing tension there for some time. We wondered if we would have to change the venue of the Congress session but the situation improved and we held the session as scheduled. The only difference was that activities like exhibitions and conferences allied with the Congress session had to be curtailed. Even

visitors were discouraged and only delegates were asked to attend. Nevertheless, we had quite a big number of visitors and the session held under the presidentship of Acharya Kripalani was a success. The Congress adopted two resolutions, one giving directives to Congressmen on their role in the Constituent Assembly and recommending that India should be a democratic republic.

When we returned from Meerut to Delhi an invitation came from Whitehall for Indian leaders to go to London for talks with the British Government, Nehru and Sardar Patel to represent the Congress, Jinnah and Liaquat Ali, the League, and Sardar Baldev Singh, the Sikhs. We could not understand the reasons for the new conference and why the Congress should be invited when it had already accepted the May 16 plan and because of that acceptance was working in the Interim Government whereas it was the Muslim League that remained in the Government though it had not withdrawn its rejection of that plan. Therefore, we wrote to the British Premier that in view of the approach of the inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly which was to meet on December 9, 1946, and in view of the fact that our reservations on the May 16 plan were already known to the British Government and our trip to London was not likely to make any material difference in our views, we would like our names not to be included among the invitees. But we added that should our presence be insisted on, we had no objection to making the trip. C. R. Attlee, British Premier, cabled back that we must come and gave the assurance that we could be back in time for the inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly.

The Muslim League, on the other hand, had decided to go (in fact, it was because Jinnah had made a statement that the whole problem should be considered *de novo* that this conference seemed to have been convened) but later, when it learnt that there had been an exchange of notes between the Congress and the British Government, it thought that the Congress had received some assurances before it signified its readiness to accept the invitation and so rejected the invitation. The Viceroy made a trip to Karachi where Jinnah happened to be then and after some discussion persuaded him to go.

Jawaharlal Nehru, Baldev Singh, Jinnah and Liaquat Ali all flew to London along with the Viceroy.

In the London conference, on December 5, 1946, the British Government made changes and additions in the May 16 plan on the plea of further clarification despite the fact that the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy had assured us that there would be no change in that plan. There was no doubt that new points had been added that were not there in the original statement. The conference availed little except to make confusion worse confounded, and Nehru returned disappointed. A special meeting of the A.-I.C.C. was called on January 5 and 6, 1947 to consider the changes made in the May 16 plan at the London talks. It was decided to accept the interpretation put on the May 16 statement and the changes made in it. We made it clear, however, that we would not tolerate any unfair manoeuvring in the case of any province, and that, if such manoeuvring did take place, we would consider ourselves free to do what we thought proper.

But prior to this, on December 9, 1946, the Constituent Assembly was inaugurated in the Hall of the Central Legislative Assembly housing the Library, which had been fitted with special acoustic and heating arrangements and tastefully decorated. To conduct the proceedings till a permanent Chairman was elected we decided to elect the oldest member of the Assembly and the honour was conferred on Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha of Bihar who conducted the proceedings very ably. Sir Hari Singh Gaur and T. Prakasam, the Andhra Kesari, were both old members but were younger than Dr. Sinha.

Before Nehru left for London we had discussed the question of the permanent Chairman of the Constituent Assembly and had decided to select a non-Congressman. Our choice fell on N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, an able and experienced man, whom we had helped in his election to the Assembly. So before members arrived in Delhi for the Constituent Assembly session the understanding was that he would be nominated to the chairmanship. But when the members began to arrive in Delhi, the position seemed to have changed. People began sounding me on my willingness to accept that office. The consensus of opinion among the members appeared

to be in favour of this proposal. I felt that it would be too heavy a responsibility and turned down the offer as I was already preoccupied with the work of two departments of the Government. When the matter finally came up before the Working Committee, I said that if I was relieved of my office in the Government, I had no objection to taking up the chairmanship. But the Committee did not accept that condition. It appeared that many members of the Constituent Assembly were determined to elect me and I decided then to bow to their will. At the Assembly then, I was unanimously elected Chairman. While congratulating me on my election, people in their goodness said many good things about me, but I felt that I was carrying a heavy burden. With faith in God, I devoted myself to the new task.

During this period, Bihar suffered a grievous blow in the death of Braj Kishore Prasad. Ill health had rendered him unfit for some time past, depriving the province of his services. Bihar will ever be grateful for the multifarious services of this patriot. Where again shall we see that penetrating intellect, unswerving determination, unfailing farsightedness, great renunciation and detachment? At a time when we Biharis looked upon public work as a pastime, he demonstrated the meaning of real service and initiated many into that creed. Whenever we felt weak, his grim determination inspired us and saved us from falling short of the ideal. He started serving the kisans when the indigo planters were supreme in the countryside and it was extremely risky to raise one's voice against them.

For me particularly it was a great blow. Braj Kishore Prasad had come to like me at the time I stood first in my Matriculation Examination and we came closer together when I took part in his movement to fight the agitation against foreign travel. Since then he had always come to my help whenever I had been in difficulty. With the marriage of my son, Mrityunjaya, to his daughter our relations became closer. After my brother's death, he had taken his place and helped us in our family affairs till his own ill health prevented all activity. The news of his passing away made me feel miserable, but the condolence message which Gandhiji sent his sons brought solace to me too. He said in his message that because

of the condition to which his body had been reduced his release from his mortal coils should be a matter of joy rather than of grief. That was a fact and I agreed with Gandhiji. May God help the sons of that great soul!

On the occasion of his *shradha*, Mrityunjaya and his wife, Vidyavati, went to Darbhanga where her brother and mother lived and where Braj Kishore Prasad had died. Mrityunjaya left his wife there and returned to Patna. God knows what happened to her, but a few days afterwards she was suddenly taken ill and two days later passed away. The moment he heard of her illness, Mrityunjaya left for Darbhanga but on the way he heard the sad news. I heard the news when I was just leaving for Patna to help restore peace in the riot-torn province. The whole household was wailing and I was overcome by sorrow. But I felt I should not postpone my departure because what, after all, was my sorrow before that of many hundreds of families who had lost their near and dear ones in the riots? I felt it my duty to suppress my own grief and go to the succour of the innocent people in Bihar. And so I fulfilled my Patna mission.

I had another shock soon. After a few days' illness in Ranchi, Janardan's child, Prakash, also expired. I had been informed over the telephone of the illness and I was preparing to leave Delhi for Ranchi when I heard the news of his death. The child's elder brother, Mohan, had died twelve years earlier, also when a child. I could not understand why Janardan and Chandramukhi should have to experience such tragedy after tragedy. How could I console them in their unbearable grief?

Life in Delhi was new and different. This was the first occasion for me to work in an office and I tried to fit myself in in the new field. The food crisis had not altogether passed, but there was surely some improvement in the situation. I hardly know if I did anything to deserve commendation, but the people were happier than they were before and were good enough to ascribe the improvement to my endeavours. But I should say the credit should go to the workers in my Ministry who rose to the occasion and the people themselves who gave me unstinted co-operation. Alone I could have done nothing. I was very busy and hardly had time to see even a friend.

Fortunately, my health had improved and no attack of asthma interfered with my work. I was hopeful that this happy condition would persist to enable me carry out my onerous duties as Chairman of the Constituent Assembly.

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